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THE
HIGHLAND SMUGGLERS.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "ADVENTURES OF A KUZZILBASH,"
"PERSIAN ADVENTURER," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :
HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1832.

LONDON:
IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

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THE
HIGHLAND SMUGGLERS.

CHAPTER I.

AIRDRUTHMORE—FIRST WHISPERINGS OF LOVE.

The melodies of air and earth;
The hues of mountain wood and sky;
And loneliness more sweet than mirth,
That leads the mind to musings high—
Give to the sweet enthusiast's face
The charm of more than mortal grace.

SUCH then, as we have endeavoured to describe them in the concluding chapter of our last volume, was the family party in which Henry Tresham found himself received with a true hearty Highland welcome. The very next morning saw him fairly domiciliated among the inmates of Airdruthmore, and marvellously reconciled to his fate. The weakness of his ankle prevented any

attempt at leaving the house or even the floor to which he was confined. But it did not hinder him from mingling with the family, enjoying the hearty "*cracks*" of the old laird, and the music both of his daughter's tongue and finger. We have seen that he had discovered her voice to be as magically sweet in song as in conversation, and he soon became aware that her performance on piano-forte and harp was such, as left him little to regret in the absence of the first proficient in those instruments. He was astonished at the brilliance of her execution, and mentally acknowledged that though the strains of Mara might be richer, the tones of Gracini more deep and full, and the notes of Billington more flexible, they possessed not, to his taste, the melting pathos of Isabelle Stewart's voice, especially when exchanging the complex harmony and surprising rapidity of an Italian bravura, for a humble strain, she poured, as it seemed, her whole soul in a flood of melody in the simple but exquisite airs of her own country.

"Aye," would the laird observe with a triumphant shake of his head, "let me hear any thing in your Haydyns or Mozarts equal to 'Mac-Gregor a ruarath,' or 'The Maids of Arrocher,' or 'Robie donna gorach,' or 'Chat-huil-cu-lô,' or 'Cro-challin;' no' to speak of 'The flowers of

the forest,' or 'Wae's my heart that we should sunder,' or 'Here's a health to them that's awa'!' or—or a thousand more like them, for they are Lowland lilt; and after all I like our own Highland *croons* and *strathspeys* as well as any of them yet. Belle, my dear, give us 'Farewell to Lochaber;'" and as she breathed out the soft melancholy notes of that touching Highland air, Tresham thought he had never heard any thing half so bewitching.

Assuredly there is in the female voice, when heard in private society, a charm totally independent of the melody, which does by no means attach to the public vocalist, let her be ever so excellent. There is luxury in the privacy itself—in the exclusiveness of our pleasure;—we feel that the lovely, and, it may be, loved musician, pours her strains for us alone:—that with the unre-served confidence which is the blessing of the family or the social circle, unchecked by the bashful timidity, or the artificial forms which fetter both feeling and gaiety in public, she freely bestows on us what others cannot obtain—a boon beyond price, because not to be purchased. Beauty and talents are voluntarily exerting themselves to charm us; and when we behold a fair young creature, seated at her instrument with upturned eye and glowing cheek, breathing forth sounds "which

might create a soul under the ribs of death," is it strange that the thought of angels should steal into our minds, or that the music which we hear so breathed should seem little less than "heavenly?" Such, at least, were Henry Tresham's thoughts, as listening to his hostess "he forgot all time;" and however much fastidious amateurs and cold-blooded critics, who shudder at the false accentuation of a half-note, and shrink from the over-lengthening of a bar, might prefer the chromatic delights of a scientific concert with its full and thundering band, the young Englishman was still better pleased to hear the touching melodies of Scotland or Erin, or the more finished harmony of an Italian air flow from the ruby lips of Isabelle Stewart.

We appeal to our readers whether in their opinion there can well be imagined a more perilous situation for a susceptible heart, than that in which Tresham was now placed with this fair syren. Young, and as yet free from any serious attachment, yet with every predisposition to form one so soon as a fitting opportunity should occur, he was thrown almost for the first time in his life into juxtaposition with a person in every way qualified to excite the tenderest emotions, and under circumstances eminently calculated to encourage their growth. For, as Henry was unable to ac-

company the gentlemen in their out-of-door excursions, his fair hostess deemed it incumbent upon her to lighten, by all the means in her power, the irksomeness of his confinement. Thus they were much thrown together, and many of the hours which otherwise would have been differently spent by both, were filled up by music and conversation. Nor could Isabelle, whose mind was perfectly capable of appreciating intellectual cultivation in others, fail of discovering very soon, that her companion not only possessed large stores of information, extracted as well from books as from other sources, but also the talent of communicating and applying it in the most interesting manner.

Such a companion and such a style of intercourse had peculiar charms for Isabelle Stewart, who, highly cultivated herself, and eager in pursuit of information, too often experienced that pining sickness of the soul, which mental, like bodily inanition, does not fail to produce. For her father, with all his frank, amiable, and gentlemanly qualities, was by no means provided with stores of hoarded learning on which he could draw for a winter evening's entertainment; the few neighbours they could boast of were for the most part decidedly his inferiors; and as for Ballytully, their most frequent inmate, her keen good sense had penetrated at a glance the shallow veil of

affected refinement with which he attempted to cloak his real vulgarity, and detected the compound of ignorance and assumption, of cunning and conceit, which lay mingled beneath.

The indulgence of this passion for intellectual intercourse was delightful, but dangerous as it was sweet. It revived sensations and longings, which in Isabelle's case were better dormant; for when he who had awakened and gratified them was gone, as in a few short days or weeks he might be, what consequence could ensue, except pain and disappointment? But when do the young, and the ardent, and inexperienced, calculate consequences, or discover future sorrow through the bright sunshine of present enjoyment? Tresham and Isabelle, pleased with each other, enjoyed the passing hour without ever dreaming of the pain which must await on that of separation. Henry continued for some days still to lay his head lightly on his pillow, for he felt that the succeeding morning would only rouse him to a renewal of enjoyment: his ankle was still so weak, as to afford a fair excuse for remaining where he was, and the scruples which at first he had felt at his *intrusion*, had, like his anxiety to return to Glenvallich, already given way, as he chose to persuade himself, before the hospitable solicitations of Airdruthmore. What share the bright eyes and heavenly

voice of his daughter might have in this change of feeling he did not stop to investigate. Glenvallich too, with frank and anxious friendship, had early crossed the hill to see his disabled co-mate; and after satisfying himself that he was extremely comfortable, and venturing upon a sly joke as to the solaces he had to look for at Airdruthmore, had returned to his own country. Thus Tresham held himself free in conscience, and certainly far from otherwise reluctant to pass the full period of his convalescence at this pleasant and hospitable mansion.

In the course of eight days, by the help of a stick, Henry ventured to accompany Miss Stewart to the garden and shrubberies, and a few days thereafter their walk was extended to the picturesque glen behind the house, where the beauties of the place, pointed out by the hand of his fair companion, were viewed with double interest.

And in truth it would have been no easy matter to select a spot more rich in natural beauties than the abode in which our young Englishman now found himself so pleasantly domesticated. But in justice to a scene so important in our narrative, we feel ourselves called upon to present our readers with a more accurate description of Airdruthmore. The valley of Strath Einort was a mountain glen of more than ordinary

breadth and fertility, and, in many parts, of remarkable beauty. An extensive tract of wild and elevated hill country poured its waters, by many subordinate glens and rocky chasms into the Einort, a swift and full stream, which, after many meanderings, found its way into one of our finest northern rivers. The banks of the Einort were in many parts densely fringed with birch and alder: in some places it flowed in long, lazy pools, divided by short rapids through rich meadow land, termed in the Highlands, *loupan*, or *ahonan*, and through cultivated fields divided by natural hedges of copsewood: in others it chafed against rocks and wooded promontories which rose above its stream to the height of several hundred feet. Hills as various in form as in colour, closed in the strath on all sides; in some places exhibiting their skirts clothed with native birch, above which rose green slopes, bold swelling shoulders of purple heather, and crests or ridges of grey rock.

But the more retired glens which opened on the strath, and contributed their waters to the Einort, comprehended perhaps its principal, if not its most obvious, beauties: and among these, by far the loveliest and most important was that which, joining it at the point of Airdruthmore, formed with the Einort the promontory from whence the place derived its name. The Ruth,

for so was named the stream which occupied the bottom of this glen, took its rise in the bosom of a lofty mountain, or rather range of mountains, several miles distant, and being increased by the waters of many lesser rills, flowed through a hollow which, in its upper region, afforded a fine summer grazing for cattle ; but the far greater part of its lower course was contracted into a deep, narrow, irregular chasm, full of wood and precipice, in their most picturesque combinations.

As this stream approached its junction with the Einort, its banks opened out and gave space for a considerable tract of level ground, fitted for all purposes of cultivation, and near it, scarcely the third of a mile from its junction with the Einort, was situated the house of Airdruthmore. The pleasant vicinity of these streams, and the accidental occurrence of some fine old trees, had no doubt been the principal inducement to former proprietors of Airdruthmore for choosing a position, somewhat dangerously low, as had more than once been testified by the ravages of those very waters which constituted so much of the temptation.

Immediately around the house lay a considerable extent of grass and corn fields, divided into *parks*, as they were called, by dykes or palings, and more rarely by hedges in no very high condi-

tion, with rows of ash, wyth elm, or sycamore trees, which contributed pleasingly to improve, and gave a sort of *finish*, to the *coup d'œil*. Above this level *carse* land, arose a more elevated tract, the *Aird*, or promontory, consisting of still more valuable soil, which gracefully and gradually swelled to right and left, until it was lost in the skirts of the hills that occupied the country between the glens of the Einort and Ruth. The base of these hills was beautifully clothed with birch, principally of the weeping kind, as also with oak and beech in less abundance. Above, might be seen the little hill farms and crofts peeping out or speckling the brown face of the brae with green and yellow patches, interspersed with dwarf birch. Above all these, the thriving but more sombre plantations of Scotch fir enlivened a little by the richer green of the *larix*, occupied the full sweep of the hills, retiring away till lost in the distant ridges of the *Mealmore*, a branch of those mountains which gave birth to the Ruth.

This *aird* or point enjoyed the full advantage of a southern aspect; and though the present laird had by no means availed himself to the full of the advantages which the position might have commanded, something had still been effected. His wife, Mrs. Stewart, had exerted both her influence and her taste in embellishing, so far as lay

in her power, the immediate vicinity of the house. Dykes, which girded in the court, and which had heretofore proved a protection only to docks, and nettles, and other nuisances, were removed—goose dubs were filled up—a comfortable space around the doors was smoothed and laid down in grass for turf. The bye-path which led from a *slap* in the dyke, and which by abuse had become the most frequented road to the door, was shut up, in favour of the approach originally constructed through an avenue of some fine old sycamore and ash trees, along which a good gravelled road was now formed, and at the entrance of which a decent gate was established. Walls and fences near the house were all repaired, and access to the offices was facilitated gradually by the formation of gravelled walks. The construction of a tolerably spacious garden was effected upon the bank of the Ruth, at the sacrifice of an excellent piece of land; and some beltings of trees and shrubs were planted to afford it shelter. A variety of similar arrangements and improvements were effected in the early period of the laird's married life, and the place gradually assumed an air of comfort and neatness by no means universal in Highland residences of that period.

The house itself had originally consisted of a simple oblong square, with two straight gavels,

containing two rooms on each floor. A wing, like a younger brother, had been appended to this simple domicile, in the which was constructed a kitchen, and some other requisite offices. But when the laird took to himself a wife, this unpretending mansion had undergone a thorough repair, and an extensive increase. Wings far exceeding the original tenement were thrown back, with large bow windows at the end; some rooms were converted into mere passages, and the remaining ones increased in breadth and height; roofs were raised, windows enlarged or struck out—in short, every customary expedient was had recourse to for amending and increasing the accommodations of a bad old house—and with pretty nearly the usual results—a better mansion might have been built with less money; but still the eked and patched-up dwelling carried an imposing appearance, which would have pleased many an eye, and probably corresponded with the situation better than a more symmetrical structure would have done; and when neatly rough cast with lime, and after the care of Mrs. Stewart had trained upon the walls a few creeping shrubs, seen as it was through trees and bushes, it assumed a pleasing, gentlemanly aspect, without too much of pretence.

In course of time the laird himself became in-

terested in the improvements of his lady, and when she died, he maintained and watched over them with a jealous fondness that mingled itself with all she had loved and created. Not that when Isabelle returned to her native place, she found it exactly in the condition which would have been the case had her mother's taste and energy continued to direct its improvements; for Mrs. Mac Donald, though a good, was by no means so refined a woman as her sister-in-law; and there was much to restore, as well as to create, before the more cultivated and enlightened mind of her niece could feel satisfied with the establishment she was henceforth to superintend. In process of time, however, the well-regulated measures of the young lady, aided by the confidence and goodwill of her father, effected the principal improvements she contemplated; and Isabelle assumed, with all the grace and energy which belonged to her character, the station which of right was her own, as mistress of her father's family.

Under her judicious attention the garden became a fair and pleasant retreat, as well as a productive appendage to the establishment; young shrubberies arose to conceal offensive objects, and walks resumed their pristine neatness. A thousand little elegancies and tasteful refinements, both in the public and private apartments of the house, denoted the influence of female care and nicety,

and a smile of mingled emotions arose on the old man's countenance, as he watched his daughter engaging in the same pursuits, and evincing, even in a higher degree, the same tastes, which he so well remembered, and had admired so much in the wife whose loss he still deplored.

Such was the scene which now, under the guidance of his bewitching hostess, claimed and received the ready admiration of Tresham. But the pleasant intercourse we have described was greatly promoted and its effects increased by an incident which unexpectedly prolonged his stay at Airdruthmore, far beyond the most protracted period which he had contemplated. Miss Stewart, as we have already remarked, was an enthusiast in the beauties of nature. It was not the grander features of the landscape alone that arrested her attention, although her pencil was very frequently employed in portraying these. She loved to ponder over and admire its minuter attractions, and every wild flower of the field had a fresh charm to invite her lingering eyes, and claim her attention. During the winter which succeeded her return to Airdruthmore, she had beguiled some hours that might otherwise have been tedious, in acquiring some knowledge of botany; and when summer had once more opened before her the riches of the vegetable world, every ramble she took possessed a double interest.

Amused by the obvious delight which she took in collecting, pressing, drying and arranging a variety of plants for a sort of hortus siccus which she was preparing, Tresham took infinite pleasure in assisting her so far as he could ; and Isabelle, in return for the various information which her companion was enabled to communicate, and grateful, doubtless, for the refreshing intercourse which she enjoyed with a mind so well cultivated as his, proposed to instruct him, so far as she was able, in the principles of a science which had so many attractions to herself. The still feeble state of his ankle, limited the scene of these lessons for a time to the garden and close vicinity of the house ; but when his increasing strength removed all cause for uneasiness, Tresham accompanied his fair hostess further a field, and the glen, the rocks, and the borders of the mountain streams became the enlarged sphere of these scientific excursions.

One day, while rambling onwards in the glen of the Ruth, beguiling the roughness of the path with lively conversation, they were reminded that they had wandered further than was their first intention, by the intense heat of the day and their own consequent lassitude. “ You must sit down a little Miss Stewart,” said Tresham ; “ I see you are fatigued, and remember you have all that wild path to go back again ; see, there is a cool seat

under the shade of these birches. Do take my arm," said he, with an expression of greater interest than he had ever dared to employ, and he ventured to draw her own within his. "You are flushed and heated, but sit down here in the shade; see, I will drive away these tormenting flies."

The flush did not abate in Isabelle's cheek at the tone and the manner of her companion, as he pressed these attentions upon her. It was, no doubt, a consciousness of this that averted her face as she withdrew her arm to take the proffered seat; and with something of embarrassment unusual to her, she busied herself in gathering the flowers and mosses that grew near her. Tresham felt the uneasiness he had occasioned, and for a moment he too remained silent. Miss Stewart was the first to recover from this momentary confusion. "Ah, look there," said she, raising her eyes to the ledges of rock which overhung them; "do you see that little fairy tuft of fern, growing on that rocky shelf above me, Mr. Tresham? that is the 'maiden's hair;' the very plant we were speaking of a little ago: the country people think it a specific in consumptive complaints, and carry it off whenever they see it, so that it is not often met with except in difficult or remote places; it is a beautiful little plant, but there is no getting at it in such a break-neck spot—what a pity!"

Alas ! for Tresham's prudence ; he was in no mood for exercising it—his enchantress was at his feet ; and in the ardor of his feelings discretion was forgot. Unlike the celebrated and enamoured nobleman, who, seeing the gaze of his mistress directed towards a brilliant star in the firmament, said, “ Do not look at it love, for I cannot give it thee ! ” Tresham no sooner saw the tiny object which had fixed the hazel eyes of his fair companion, than darting from her, he had climbed the rock by another way ere she guessed his intention. Bending over the projecting ledge he seized the prize, and was returning safely, when his foot tript among some pieces of the crumbling rock, and in attempting to save himself, he once more wrenched his unhappy ankle, the weakness of which he had entirely overlooked in his eagerness to oblige his beautiful instructress.

Alarmed for his safety, even before the accident, Isabelle had started up and was hastening forward to reproach the young man for his imprudence, when she saw with dismay that he was lying on the ground, writhing with pain, and unable to rise. “ Good heavens, Mr. Tresham, what is the matter ? you are hurt I am certain—is it not so ? pray tell me ! exclaimed Isabelle, with a face that grew as pale as that of her companion, although in the

next moment the blood rushed back with redoubled force, as Tresham grasped the hand which she held out to assist him. "Nay, don't alarm yourself, my dear Miss Stewart," said he, in accents where tenderness struggled with suppressed anguish; "it is nothing, believe me; I—I have only disabled this unlucky ankle of mine again, I believe; but it's nothing—a mere trifle."

"A mere trifle, Mr. Tresham! how can you say so? I'm distressed extremely—and for me too it was—to get that foolish thing; nay, pray be patient—don't attempt to rise—sit still here while I go to the house for assistance."

"O pray do not," said Tresham, earnestly, "see I'm well already," and, sick with pain, he contrived to get up, and attempted to limp some steps along—but it would not do.

"Stop, Mr. Tresham—take my arm then; it is neither 'mighty to save,' nor very powerful to help, but it may assist you till stronger aid comes; and surely I owe you this—it was my foolish wish that caused the mischief."

The temptation was irresistible. Tresham, with some further apology, did accept the arm of his fair guide—scarcely to lean on it, but to taste an enjoyment which he did not venture to allow even to himself was so sweet—the close and de-

lightful proximity to one whose loveliness and mental perfections were making rapid inroads on his heart.

Slowly, for she would not permit him to hazard exertion, the young lady and her disabled knight proceeded down the glen, in this dangerously familiar attitude, and, not until the appearance of her father, whose help it was impossible to deny as being more efficient than that of his daughter, did 'Tresham release the arm of his fair conductress. "Hey? what the deuce, my young friend, at the same ill work again? a bad way to mend old sores, faith: well, so much for your threatening to leave us; ye're tied now by the leg for another month at least, and Isabelle and old Grizzie must take to nursing you again. Grizzie will be delighted, I dare say."

"Ah—much obliged to Grizzie, good kind soul; but I hope it won't come to that. I trust to being a parlour patient only. I could not brook the confinement of my own room, after the pleasure I have known since I left it, even with all the advantage of Mrs. Macfarlane's valuable assistance."

"O you ungrateful varlet! little do you know how much good the worthy dame speaks of you; she swears by you, for a douce pleasant gentleman, I assure you. But it's the way with all you young men when an *ould* woman is concerned. If

Grizzie was but eighteen now—but never mind, we'll have you all to ourselves; for there's Ballytully tells me he must be off for Edinburgh, on business; and my sister Janet is going to pay a visit to one of her late husband's friends, near Keppoch; so ye must keep our spirits up with your cracks, man, and we'll see to make ye sound before the month is up."

During the time of this colloquy they were progressing towards the house; and in spite of the pain he suffered, Tresham would not have exchanged his swelled and disabled limb for the best supporter in his Majesty's dominions. With the rapid calculation of passion, it flashed through his brain, though his better judgment scarce interfered in the conclusion, "Now shall I have this fascinating creature *all* to myself; now will no stupid old aunt, nor intermeddling *country cousins* interrupt our delicious tête-a-têtes"—for the keen perceptive jealousy of love had already increased his instinctive dislike to the vulgar and officious Macaskill, who on his part continued furtively to eye the polished Englishman with an envious and malignant regard, although his prudence prompted a demeanour which was obsequious even to fawning.

The whisperings of hope, and the anticipations of nascent affection for once were realized; and Tresham enjoyed for many days, the intoxicating

delight of quaffing long and unchecked draughts of love from the eyes and lips of his enchantress. That momentous fortnight rivetted the chain which chance and occasion had begun to weave around his heart. Instead of confining himself to his chamber, as during the first accident, until able to hobble into the drawing-room, a sofa in that apartment was discovered to be fully more comfortable to the injured limb. The reluctance which he at first felt at presenting himself swathed and bandaged before strangers, had vanished; and he was now regularly supported every morning into the room occupied by the diminished family, where, unless at meals, there was now no other inmate than her whom he alone desired to look upon, and from whom he continued daily to receive such marks of gentle consideration, as none but a female knows how to bestow, and which was rendered doubly precious by that maidenly reserve and shrinking delicacy, so conspicuous in the character of his young hostess.

On Miss Stewart's side, these attentions were unquestionably tendered in the cordial spirit of benevolence and hospitality alone. For though she certainly admired the cultivation, the elegance, and the fascinating manners of her guest—qualities more striking and attractive, because in her situation they were rarely seen--no sentiment of

a warmer nature had as yet intruded itself in her mind—she was still “fancy free;” contrast, and absence, and the loss of a familiar and prized enjoyment, had not yet done their work, nor pointed out the quarter whence danger was to come. In happy unsuspecting innocence, Isabelle enjoyed the pleasure which Providence bestowed, without any alloying fears of the future.

We have already adverted to the trying situation of these young persons, and the perils of juxtaposition in circumstances so peculiar. We have heard it observed, that a long sea voyage is probably the most dangerous ordeal to which two sensitive young hearts can be exposed. But what, we boldly ask, is that, to the seclusion of a lone Highland glen, with infinitely more frequent and varied opportunities of intercourse—free from all intrusive interference—lovely weather—enchancing scenery—an interesting invalid, recovering under a due course of tender care, to accompany his young and lovely nurse in long rambling walks, through shady woods, reposing on green mossy banks, or slowly wandering along babbling brooks and under arching rocks—rich, mild, autumnal evenings, shedding all their softening melancholy influence over the soul—good heavens! the warmth of sunshine, and the dews of heaven to the growth of summer flowers, is nothing to it! We only

marvel that the declaration did not bolt out in a fortnight, and that neither elopement nor special licence were had recourse to within the month.

Fortunately we have to do with discreet and well-conducted persons, from whom no such overhasty proceedings are to be apprehended ; every thing progressed with due order and decorum ; but matters assuredly did not stand still. When Tresham was again able to exert himself, their walks were resumed, and having learned prudence from misfortune, he was soon enabled to accompany his fair hostess over the grounds and environs of the place : nor did it require any adventitious excitement to draw from him very rapturous expressions of admiration at the beauties of her favourite glen. It was in truth a scene of such uncommon interest—so wild, so romantic, and so savage, yet so solemn, so rich, and beautiful by turns—that its own natural attractions alone would have elicited his warmest commendations, independent of its claims as the favourite retreat of Isabelle Stewart.

CHAPTER II.

HIGHLAND SCHOOLS.

To every class we have a school assigned,
Rules for all ranks and food for every mind.

IT was when thus enabled to ramble abroad with his fascinating companion, and when each recurring object drew forth some intelligent remark, or occasioned some interesting discussion—as she pointed out projected improvements, or explained the nature of those already completed, and the energy and benevolence of her mind became illustrated by her actions no less than by her sentiments, it was then that Tresham learned to appreciate the character of her who had created so powerful an interest in his heart. He had now abundant opportunity to remark the soundness and purity of her principles, the correctness of her judgment, her clear, straightforward sense, the

lucid order which pervaded every act and thought, as she steadily performed her various duties. He witnessed with admiration her judicious charity and sincere benevolence, and was struck with the systematic arrangement by which their influence was usefully diffused over a wide circle. He saw that however sympathy might be excited, little was ever yielded to impulse; that the ready hand was checked, until minute investigation had proved the worthiness and necessity of the applicant. It was obvious that the anxiety of Miss Stewart was directed no less to prevent the increase of poverty, by encouraging industry, than to relieve its pressure when unavoidable; and she contrived numerous expedients for employing those who were unable to gain a livelihood by the customary modes of labour. It was, for instance, by old men past their ordinary working period of life, and by little urchins whose absence was a relief to their toiling parents, that her own domains were kept in order, sorely to the annoyance of the Lowland gardener, who was directed to be easy on the poor weak creatures, and who grumbled sadly at the little appearance he could show for his work. "Weel, I hae been wi' mony a maister an' mistress," he would say, "but Miss Stewart beats them a' for a choice o' warkmen! naithing can I get but fusionless auld bodachs and glaiket weans

—I like to gar my wark tell after me, but what speed can a body come wi' the likes o' them? Then there's auld Duncan maunna be hurried nae-wise—an' little Donald's no to be our sair haud'en down because he's but a bairn—but after a', these leddies 'ill aye hae their vagaries, an' Miss Isabelle hurts nae ane but hersel.' ”

In fact, Miss Isabelle was not to be deterred from her charitable object by the growling of Mr. Andrew Cumming the gardener—it was one of her methods of bestowing charity. On the contrary, she would laugh at his remonstrances and reply, “ Well, Andrew, if you can't get through the work with the strength you have, I must increase my corps of veterans until it is equal to the service required.” “ Na, mem, that wud be mending matters wi' a vengeance,” would Andrew reply, “ na, na, we'll just see what me and the lads can do we'resels, without any mair o' thae auld jocks.”

But it was to the education of the rising generation that Miss Stewart's anxiety and efforts were principally directed. Not that sort of education which is limited to the customary acquirements of reading, writing, arithmetic, &c., and which is sometimes extended to accomplishments unsuited to, and therefore useless in their rank in life. Her views extended to forming the minds and principles of the young around her, for the discharge

of their duties in that station in which Providence had placed them. She felt that while measures were taken to instil into their minds the truths of religion, it was not less important to impress upon them its practical precepts, to inspire them with a love of truth, of order, and sobriety, and to fit them for being good servants and useful members of society.

To effect any radical or even considerable change in the manners of the grown-up part of the community, Miss Stewart soon discovered would be a vain and hopeless attempt. As she became better acquainted with the habits and language of the people—for her quick ear and acute perception speedily enabled her to comprehend the language which was spoken around her—and saw the total negligence of fathers and mothers regarding the principles of their children—when she saw that falsehood was encouraged by example and sufferance, if not by positive precept, and that honesty itself, in trifling matters, was but little regarded,—she ceased to wonder at the constant instances of untruthfulness, low cunning, and deceit, which had at first astonished as much as they grieved her. It was doubly painful, for it dispelled many a pleasing and cherished vision of her native land, and opened her eyes to the un-

pleasant reality. Young as she was when she quitted the country, it was impossible that she could have formed any just estimate of the character of those around her; she only remembered their kindness to herself, their devotion to her father. Her ear still thrilled with the endearing terms in which the Gaelic language so abounds, and by which she had been addressed by her kind attendants; and when she heard them again after years of absence, her heart warmed at the familiar sounds. But, unhappily, when Isabelle was delighting herself with the notion that the Highlanders were the most attached, the most estimable, the most trustworthy and upright people in the world, her eyes were opened by some monstrous falsehood, or some disgusting meanness, committed, perhaps, by some one whom she was most disposed to esteem and to confide in. Even the favourite servants of her father's household—persons who enjoyed the full confidence of the family, and who in matters of importance merited it, she detected, in lesser matters, to be no more worthy of reliance than others.

The truth is, that most of the lower class of Highlanders do not annex to falsehood any criminal idea, unless the untruth be uttered with a malicious intent. To avert displeasure from them-

selves, or to please* or amuse their superiors, they deem it no evil to invent a story, and to support it with a tissue of untruths. Nor are their notions of honesty less inconsistent and perverted. Trust them with untold gold, and it will be safe as with yourself. Sleep with door and window open, and your property is secure as if fenced with bolt and bar. Your clothes on the wash green, your tools and utensils of house or farm, may lie abroad for weeks, untouched. Yet these honest people will not scruple to go into your wood and cut a tree for their cart shafts, or couples for their house—nor to turn their sheep, horses, or cattle into a young pasture to graze—nor to carry off your palings for their fire—nor to dig in your banks for earth for their dunghills. “It canna hurt the laird,” they say, “he can spare it; and it ’ill do me muckle good.” When the children see such petty thefts practised by the parents—when they are sent secretly into the woods to carry off bundles of wood, or burthens of leaves and moss for the dunghill, is it wonderful that they should grow up with very lax ideas of honesty and veracity?

* “*Me* tell a *lee*, mem!” said an old servant one day to her mistress, who had accused her of an untruth; “I wud na tell a *lee* for the world! many a gude story hae I tell’t ye to keep ye’re mind easy—but for a *lee*—na, never did I do siccen a thing.”

These were grave and melancholy evils to grapple with; and, unfortunately, they were not the only ones which a philanthropic improver in the Highlands has to contend with. Habits of filth and disorder, of idleness and unsteadiness, prevail to a degree which those who have not witnessed them would find it difficult to credit; and in truth it does almost seem incredible, that people, who abroad extort the praise of all who know them, for their sober, steady, orderly, and industrious habits, should be of the same stock and kindred as they who are so deficient in these qualities at home. If a benevolent person, desirous to improve the condition of his Highland tenantry, endeavours to persuade them that by keeping their houses clean, by removing the *dubs* and dunghills from before doors and windows—aye, or from the very rooms and passages,—by levelling the ground round their houses, and perhaps by making a little patch of garden instead of letting the nettles and docks grow there,—that by these means they will add to their comfort and better their condition, they will listen with an air of great interest—they will cordially assent to all that is said. The men will doff their bonnets, and promise compliance—the women will “bless your bonnie face for taking so much trouble,” and smile, and curtsy, and promise to do every thing required. But will they

do so? do they even entertain a thought of acting according to your advice? Never an idea of the kind enters their heads—and the same process may be repeated with the same results—*ad nauseum usque*—till you are weary. Should the gardener or griever be sent to enforce or assist in executing the orders, they will be performed with internal execrations at the *sassenach* fancies of the laird or lady, and the loss of work and time; and above all, of the “good *sappy middin*,” that may have been made the victim of the unwelcome refinement. “Weel, weel, never mind—it winna stand long,” is the comfort of the discomposed inhabitants—and their prophecy is soon fulfilled.—for as the gardener cannot be every day looking after such improvements, down come a parcel of cows, and children, worse than horned *nowte*—fences are broken down—borders destroyed—plants torn up—and of all the lazy lads and lasses that sit scratching their heads within the hut, not one will move to rescue from destruction what has cost so much trouble to call into being.

Many were the strenuous, but abortive attempts, thus made by Miss Stewart, to “make the leopard change his spots”—to inspire the cotters and small tenants about Airdruthmore with a sense of the comforts of cleanliness and order. The laird smiled and shook his head, for though he wil-

lingly lent his aid so far as he could to the uphill work of improvement, he was himself too much imbued with the besetting sin of the land to be of much avail. The subaltern authorities took the lead of their superior, and each in their several departments gave proof of the procrastinating, numbing influence of the atmosphere they breathed.

Saunders Morrison, the grieve, was a noted good farmer. He had seen the carse of Gowry, and would have turned his back on none in "the Lothians" for laying down a field of turnips or barley—yet little was the care he bestowed upon the niceties of his trade. Thistles and rag-weeds reared their unseemly heads in fields and pastures. Dykes and drains every where called aloud for repairs. Gates hung swinging on their broken hinges, or lay rotting in the weeds by the road side, while the gaps, stopped with brush-wood, invited the sheep of the well-nibbled pastures around, to trespass on the rich foggage thus imperfectly protected. Nor was less neglect observable in the farm offices and their dependencies. Doors and windows flapped in the wind for want of a hook or a bolt. Slates or thatch, driven off by the wind, called in vain for replacement or repair. The gavel of a barn, which six years before had "given notice to quit," was still tempo-

rarily propped with logs of wood. Broken-down carts, ploughs and harrows, wheel and hand-barrows, with such like farm gear, bearing testimony of original excellence, but sadly "fallen from their high estate," were cast here and there in lamentable confusion; and the excellent substantial harness, which had suffered more from neglect and carelessness than use, was patched or supplied by cords, hay ropes, or even twisted birch withies.

But we need not further insist on an ungrateful subject. With such materials, and such tools, there was no working to any good end, so Miss Stewart made it her object to withdraw the younger part of the family as early as possible from the pernicious influence of their parents. She had discovered, that by approaching these very people, supine and indolent as they were, by their weak side, of pride and ambition, much might be effected towards the good she had in view. Careless about themselves, many of them earnestly desired to see their son—their favourite—their *Hamish*, or their *Donald*, rise in the world; and though insensible, perhaps, to the value of sound principles, they would have pinched themselves of food and raiment, to afford him sufficient "schooling."

To furnish such tuition upon the best and most

reasonable terms, became then the anxious desire of this benevolent young lady. To her surprise and concern she learned, that in a very extensive, and comparatively populous district, there was but one person who exercised in any shape the office of a pedagogue—and that even he, the parish schoolmaster, was of a character very little calculated to be useful.

In former days—we hope these days are past—these situations, so important to the welfare of the rising generation, were too often bestowed with reference less to personal qualifications, than to considerations of interest; and an importunate retainer, or a superannuated domestic, had often a better chance of success than the modest and meritorious student. Something of this nature had occurred in the parish of ——.

Ignorant, but arrogant, a drunkard and a beast—a better farmer than a teacher, the master of the school paid infinitely more attention to the little croft which he cultivated, than to the living garden of youthful minds, unhappily entrusted to his care; and as the petty tyrant's favour was dispensed in exact proportion to the degree of usefulness of his pupils, it occurred that at the periods of the principal farming operations, his scholars were more often to be found in the field,

hoeing his potatoes, weeding his croft, or making his hay, than in the school-room, reading their bible, or casting up their sums.

In Scotland it is no easy matter to procure the removal of a parish schoolmaster, however glaring his faults or inefficiency may be; and the consequence is, that most "heritors," or proprietors, are content to suffer the inconvenience and reproach of such an incumbrance, rather than incur the trouble, the frequently severe expense, and not unfrequent vexation of a defeat, which may attend a formal prosecution. We shall not trespass on our readers with a detail of the efforts and the process by which Miss Stewart, with the zealous assistance of Mr. Ross, the minister of the parish, (to whom they have already been introduced,) succeeded in persuading the unworthy schoolmaster to quit his situation, and surrender his charge. He accepted the lease of a small farm on the Airdruthmore property, and the young lady had the satisfaction of seeing the school occupied by a deserving young man, who had been a student of divinity, and was in every respect qualified for the charge.

She even went further; for exerting herself with the charitably disposed in her own and the neighbouring parish, she was enabled to induce a proper person to take a house in a remote glen, for

the purpose of keeping a school for such children as might be too far distant to attend the regular parish school.

The boys being thus provided for, Miss Stewart turned her attention to the youth of her own sex, and resolved to establish a school which should be more immediately under her own superintendence. The most difficult part of the undertaking was to find a suitable teacher, and she was fortunate in her selection. Mrs. Paisley, the widow of a reduced tradesman, was induced to accept of the pittance which her patroness could offer, in order to provide for an only child, and to occupy to some advantage the time which had now few demands upon it. To sound religious principles, Mrs. Paisley added the habits of order, cleanliness and activity, which were so much required, and her gentle manners, and more cultivated mind, rendered her a suitable example and model for those who were to be placed under her charge.

“If you have nothing more interesting in view this morning, Mr. Tresham,” said Miss Stewart one day as they sallied out after breakfast, “will you accompany me to see a little settlement of mine, in which I take a great interest? though I don’t know that I have any fair claim upon your sympathy. What can you care for seeing a parcel of wild Highland lassies taught to read and write

and sew? perhaps you had better try to amuse yourself otherwise."

"By no means. I shall be very glad to go with you. Surely I who have benefited so much, as your pupil, should take an interest in your school. Not that my early recollections of a school are the most agreeable in the world; birch and confinement are neither of them to be reckoned among the pleasures of memory. I hope, Miss Stewart, plenty as it is hereabouts, you don't suffer much spoliation to be made for these tyrannical purposes."

"Ah, I hate all tyranny; but you shall judge for yourself. In the mean time, here comes one of my little scholars. Mairack, dear, how are you?" said Miss Stewart, with an encouraging smile, addressing a girl of thirteen or fourteen, who dropped a curtsy as she came up. "I'm glad to see you on your way to school to-day, it's a sign my good old Moome is well when you can leave her so soon."

"Ou, she's very weel the day, mem," said Mairack, repeating her curtsy, "I left her sitting in the sun wi' the cat aside her; but she was very bad wi' *it* most o' last week, an' there was two days *it* never left her, an' I most thocht to go for the minister mysel', but he was in the waster pairish:

an' then I thocht to go doon to the hoose, wi' your leave, for yoursel', mem, but she wud na let me."

"But, Mairack, you should certainly have come when she was so ill; do so always again. Tell her, dear, that I will surely see her to-morrow."

"Yes, mem," said Mairack, and away she tripped to the school, while Tresham and his companion followed more slowly.

"And what, or who may *Moome* be, Miss Stewart, I pray? if the question be *discreet*."

"What! so long in the Highlands and not know what *Moome* means? *Moome* is Gaelic for nurse; and is a word singularly emphatic in that language, as the connection is one of peculiar tenderness and force in the country."

"Your nurse, then!"

"Yes, my nurse," replied Miss Stewart, with a smile of singular expression, "Old Elsie is my nurse."

"And she is ill? so, at least, I understood your little Mairack to say; but she talked strangely too."

"Aye, poor Elsie is ill."

"What, is there any mystery about the matter, Miss Stewart?—pray tell me—I love a mystery, and I am curious on the subject—if not impertinent."

“ O no, not at all ; you shall hear it all, never fear, but not now, for it’s a long story, and here’s the school.”

The position of the school had been chosen rather for convenience than beauty ; and yet it was pleasantly situated upon the slope of a green brae, sheltered both behind and on either side by birch trees, among which grew abundance of juniper and blackberry bushes. The house itself, consisting of a large apartment for the school-room, and a smaller one which served as the mistress’s bedroom, had little pretensions to style of any sort. Like those of a similar class throughout the country, it was built of dry stone walls, some five feet high, finished with divots or turf, which had been peeled from the surface of the neighbouring muir. Within, however, it had been neatly plastered with clay, and white-washed : a chimney, (a rare luxury,) had been built in the partition, with a few bars of iron for a grate, fitted for the use of peats and wood, the country fewel. The roof had been carefully thatched with fern, a neat and durable covering, and a few coarse deals nailed upon the stretching beams and rafters, and then white-washed, served as a rude ceiling. A little porch of birch stems and branches protected the entrance from the cold winds of winter, and a few creeping plants partly covered the walls and curled

around the little sashed windows, all of which were in perfect repair. Behind, a small garden was inclosed by a stone dyke, surmounted by brush-wood, to exclude the depredations of sheep or mischievous boys; and in it might be seen a few vegetables and pot-herbs rare among the ordinary Highlanders, with some gay common flowers. Against the sunny side stood two bee-hives, the inmates of which appeared busy among the blooming heather and rich thymy banks around the cottage.

As they approached the place, they could distinguish the hum of little voices, but not that loud buzz which attracts the passers-by at many a road-side school. "It cannot but disturb the attention of those who are getting their task," observed Isabelle to her companion, on his remarking this peculiarity, "to hear a whole class repeating aloud, perhaps, a dozen other lessons. The mistress has on this account been recommended to preserve silence and order among her pupils; it is therefore the voice of only one pupil you now hear. Let us go on; I have no fear of surprising Mrs. Paisley, and therefore we shall enter at once.

Knocking at the door, and receiving an invitation to "come in," Tresham then found himself in a homely, but neat, well-lighted apartment, in which were assembled some thirty or forty girls of

all ages from seven to seventeen, seated on forms around long deal tables, and variously occupied. All were cleanly and decently dressed, and maintained a composed and respectful demeanour. Some were reading, others writing, and others were employed at needlework. The mistress, a middle aged woman, of a mild benevolent countenance, sat in a chair at the head of the room before a small table; a little girl of ten years old was reading a chapter of the bible on one hand, while she examined the seam of another who stood at her other side.

The entrance of the young lady and her companion produced but little disturbance. The schoolmistress acknowledged it by slightly rising and instantly reseating herself, but the lessons proceeded as before. Isabelle put several questions to Mrs. Paisley, respecting the conduct and progress of her pupils, interrogated some of them on subjects connected with their tasks; praised some, censured others gravely, and bestowed a few words of encouragement on such as appeared timid and shy; and it was pleasant to observe the air of reverence and attachment with which they all regarded her.

“ Well, Mr. Tresham,” said Miss Stewart, when after a little while passed in examining the school and its interesting inmates, they left it on

their return homewards; “how have you been pleased? what think you of my little flock? Did you see many symptoms of the *tyrant* or the *birch* among them? Do you repent your complaisance, or regret your time?”

“No, indeed—far, far from it,” replied Tresham in a more serious tone than usual. “Believe me, Miss Stewart, I am neither so unfeeling nor so indifferent to the good of my kind, as not to be filled with delight at the spectacle I have witnessed, and with deep respect for the motives and the energy which have spread this ‘table in the wilderness,’ for those who must otherwise have pined of intellectual famine.”

“I am happy you approve,” replied Isabelle, blushing a little at the serious earnestness of his manner. “You cannot imagine the need there was for something of the kind. One only regrets how limited must be the good that such small means can produce; but that should never discourage us from such partial efforts as we can make.”

“Your effort here at least, has been eminently successful, so far as I can judge—that Mrs. Paisley appears to me the very perfection of such a functionary; but how did you ever induce such a woman to accept of such a situation? Are her emoluments high?”

“ O no ! An Englishman like you, accustomed to a country overflowing with riches, can scarcely believe how little will act as an inducement for people to undertake still more painful, and less profitable tasks in so poor a country as the Highlands of Scotland. Distress is a great tamer of pride and lowerer of expectations.”

“ But what, then, may her emoluments be ? ”

“ Why, she has, as you see, a free house and garden, and the run of a cow in the wood about the house—these are things of comparatively little value to us, but of much to her. She has also eight pounds a year of fixed salary, besides her school fees.”

“ But they must amount to something handsome surely ? She seems to have a full school.”

“ Aye, full enough ; but it produces no great things after all. It was the opinion of the most intelligent friends, whom I consulted on the occasion, that it would be right to insist upon the parents paying something for the instruction of their children, if it was only to give it a value in their eyes : for assuredly that which is got for nothing is but little prized. So the children pay from one shilling to half-a-crown a quarter, according to the instruction given, and the parents' ability ; but what with pleaded poverty, and sundry other excuses, I do not believe the poor woman nearly

doubles her salary. But then she gets some potatoes and eggs, and sometimes a little meal, and such trifling benefactions. The scholars also supply her with a little firewood—by the custom of the country each girl brings in her hand a bit of stick or a peat or two as they come to school in the morning, and this serves for the day's firing; and the parents work a turn in her garden and plant her potatoes, so that she contrives to subsist very comfortably."

"God bless me!" exclaimed Tresham, "comfortably! Sixteen pounds a year and a house, for thirty or forty scholars! and that to support a mother and her daughter! and comfortably!—it is wonderful indeed."

"Aye, these are your high southern notions. You must not judge of things here by the standard of England. In these latitudes, such an establishment is considered a very comfortable livelihood. Then Mrs. Paisley is so much beloved in the neighbourhood, that she receives many presents in return for extraordinary attentions. She is skilful, too, in several branches of the healing art, and is not unfrequently sent for, in cases where more efficient aid ought to be called in; but there is no such, I am sorry to say, in the glen. We cannot do every thing at once. Perhaps hereafter——"

"It is astonishing how much you have done,

Miss Stewart—far more, I assure you, than I could have imagined. And when I see how judiciously, and with what happy results all has been effected, I am shocked and ashamed at the comparatively useless and inconsiderable life I have led till now myself—squandering time and money that might have been so much better employed. But I can admire what I am unable to imitate. I do envy this talent of doing good!”

“Nay, Mr. Tresham, you overrate my efforts as much as you assuredly undervalue both your own ability and energy. Every one, believe me, has a power of usefulness, and yours, I am confident, might be a large one. It is not merely by establishing a school, or pensioning a few poor people, that good may be done. You, like others, have your sphere to act in, and you were never born to be an unprofitable servant—you have a heart and a mind made for better things. Nay, it is my turn now to pay compliments—to say truths rather: you have only to open your eyes, to feel your own powers, in order to place at high interest the talents with which your Maker has intrusted you. But I beg pardon,” added she, hesitating and slightly blushing, “I am taking a very undue liberty in thus turning counsellor unsought.”

“Not unsought,” Miss Stewart; “not un-

sought, but most welcome and acceptable. I wish I could often meet with such advice, it would do me much good; but you may believe me, that whatever happens to me hereafter, I shall never forget Airdruthmore, nor the lessons I have learned there. I cannot tell you how refreshing I have felt it, to get away from the heartless, interested, great world, and to witness the simple virtues that may be found in a remote and primitive place like this. How quietly might a man's life glide away in such a glen, disgraced by no follies, disturbed by no ambition! How often since I have been here, have I thought of those lines of Scott—do you remember them, Miss Stewart?

‘ And is there not some humble glen,
Where we content and poor,
Might build a cottage in the shade——’ ”

He did not venture to proceed, but the heightened colour of his companion convinced him that her memory supplied the remaining lines, and left her at no loss as to their import.

“ Ah! here we are at home again, and in good time,” said she; “ for we have fallen into a strange moralizing strain, and I dare say your ankle tells you we have done for one forenoon. To-morrow morning, if you dare to trust yourself with me

again, I may perhaps indulge your curiosity by an introduction to the personage of whom you heard to-day, on our way to the school. You will find my old *moome* well worth your acquaintance, I promise you."

CHAPTER III.

A HIGHLAND SYBIL.

Lady, I'm auld an' sair forfairn,
A melancholy wicht,
And thou that wont to cheer my eild,
Wi' cordial kindness light.

It's mony a fearfu' sicht I've seen,
An' mony an elrich hour;
But siccan sights an' sic a night
Saw I never nane before.

THE events and conversation we have endeavoured to narrate in our last chapter, produced a very powerful effect upon the mind of Tresham. Not only were his feelings excited, but his judgment was gratified by witnessing the diffusion of so much solid good over a large community, and by means so comparatively small. Nor need we add, that his love for the amiable authoress of these benefits experienced a daily and rapid increase. The

calmness and clearness of a lover's perceptions may certainly be fairly questioned ; yet, happy is that lover whose conscience and judgment unite in approving the object of his increasing passion.

But small persuasion was required to induce our hero to accompany his fair hostess next morning on the purposed expedition ; and he did so, prepared to discover fresh cause for love and admiration. Passing by a little pathway, through the birch-wood near the school-house, Miss Stewart led the way through the heathery pasture beyond it, and after a walk of nearly half a mile, they crossed a rising ground adorned with dropping birches, and dived by a steep track into a little glen which Tresham had not before seen.

A rill, which stole from the mossy hill above, had worn a chasm, deeper than its size might account for, through which it brawled away, to join the Ruth. The sides were, for the most part, rocky, and overhung with birch, hazel and mountain ash, and, in general, approached so close as to leave no space except for the stream at their feet. In one spot, however, the ravine opened out so as to form a basin of green turf scarcely one-third of an acre in extent. This little natural meadow lay at the foot of a rocky precipice exposed to the south, while the burn, making a semi-circular curve beneath a number of weeping birch-trees, encompassed it on three of its sides.

It was a pleasant retired spot ; the heather and the wild thyme, so frequent in such Highland retreats, served as the constant resort of myriads of bees ; and the daisies, and butter-cups, and harebells, were the delight of all the children of every *toon* around.

As Tresham and his conductress wound down through the birch-trees into the hollow, he became aware of the smoke of a cottage which arose from a clump of trees almost under the rocks upon its northern side. “ Now, if you have within you one lurking spark of the zealous Catholic,” said Miss Stewart, turning to him with a mysterious smile ; “ or if the smallest spice of romantic superstition belongs to your nature, cross yo u brow, tell your beads, mutter any adjuration you may recollect against witchcraft and the evil eye. If you be good knight and true, call upon Heaven and the lady of your heart to aid you in perilous adventure ; for lo ! I, even I, am about to conduct you into the very den of the witch—to the abode and presence of the Sybil of the Glen.”

“ No Catholic am I, Miss Stewart,” replied Tresham in the same tone, “ but a good sober Protestant, who defies the devil, the pope, and the pretender, with all witches and hobgoblins to boot.—Good knight and true, however, I hope to be found, and as such subscribe to all the condi-

tions which bind one—so *allons* for the adventure!—and for lady bright to inspire my prowess, on whom should I call, to whom should I look for inspiration, but to her who is my conductress and guide in the perilous enterprise?”

“ Ah!—gallant as any *preux chevalier* of them all. But now, muster your courage—grasp your sword, and say your battle prayer; for yonder sits the enchantress in person, ready doubtless to defend her precincts against all rash intruders.”

As the young lady said these words, they issued from the wood upon the little meadow, in full view of the cottage. It was a small black broom-thatched hut, to which, however, a decent window and a doorway, with a door to close it, imparted an air of somewhat greater comfort than distinguished the usual highland abodes. The rock behind almost overhung the roof; and a fine mountain ash, or *rowan*-tree, overshadowed a part with its feathery leaves and profusion of berries, now bright in their autumnal tint of coral, as if it had been placed there by the enchantress to guard her from the influence of all foreign spells. A few fine holly-bushes grew near one end of the cottage, and a group of three beautiful weeping birches adorned as well as sheltered it in front.

The day was hot and sultry; yet, far from seeking the shade, the occupant of this retired abode

was sitting upon a low stool close to the door of the hut, enjoying the full force of the sun's rays as they beat upon the black turf walls behind her. There was nothing very remarkable in her appearance, unless it was the somewhat singular neatness of her simple attire. A white, or rather yellow blanket of plaiding stuff, chequered with lines of red, and green, and purple, like the skeleton of a tartan pattern, enveloped her person; and being brought close round her head and under her chin, was fastened on her breast by a silver brooch of great breadth. The edge of a mutch, or cap, was just to be detected beneath this homely costume, and its snowy whiteness was rivalled by the silver locks which peeped forth from beneath it.

The countenance, thus exposed, bore traces of extreme age; but its expression rather betokened the saddening influence of those sorrows which had bowed down the sufferer in the lapse of years, than any natural moroseness. On the contrary, a smile of meek resignation dwelt habitually about the mouth, and lent a radiance to the withered features, which not even the vacant glare of her sightless eye could obscure. So much of intelligence, indeed, did the old woman's countenance possess, that not until Tresham had advanced pretty close to her, did he discover that the light of day had to her been for ever darkened.

But though calm resignation had now perhaps become the most striking characteristic of her expression, it was a placidity untinged with weakness or despondency. Firmness, and even magnanimity, were, on the contrary, strongly impressed upon the high and open forehead and overarching brow, the furrows of which told less of the decrepitude of age, than of the mental anguish which had agitated it: perhaps the acute physiognomist might have detected in its complicated lines somewhat of that anxious constriction of the brow which belongs to the visionary—the victim of an ardent and superstitious imagination.

Her wasted arms, where each vein and sinew rose in high relief above the loose and wrinkled skin, were listlessly crossed upon her knee; but long before it seemed possible for the sound of footsteps to have reached her, she changed her attitude, smoothed down her plaid and petticoat, and assumed an erect position as in expectation of her visitors. It was as they approached, that Tresham remarked her blindness to his conductress.

“Hush!” replied she, whispering; “before you part with her, you may find how slightly her intelligence is affected by that misfortune.”

“Well, Elsie, how are you, my good *moome*? Sunning yourself, I see, in this fine hot day.”

“The blessing of *Him* be upon you, darling ! and on that sweet light step o’ yours: it brings joy to my ould heart—*maithal agus moolie* !”

“I wish it could bring more, my dear moome; I wish it could bring health and sight, and all that you have lost.”

“Aye, darling, it’s you that wud like weel to see your old moome as she once was; but health, and sight, and happiness, and all that I have lost, were the gifts o’ the Lord, and he has taken them again, as weel was his right. But he has left me you, maithal, and that’s much yet, praised be his name! But who is ’t that’s wi’ you, darling?—that’s no’ a kenned footstep.”

“Aye, moome, so you have found him out to be a stranger already, have you?”

“No just a stranger neither, maybe, darling; but it’s no the good laird, wi’ his hearty honest dunt on the grun; and it’s no Ballytully, that used whiles to be coming wi’ you—he hasna been here this many a day—his fut’s more heavy and loun-derin’ like. Nor it’s no the gude minister, wi’ his sober weel-considered tread; but I’ll tell ye, mait-hal, who it is—it’s just the young English gentleman, that’s staying at the place, and no other—that’s what it is.”

“Well, Elsie,” replied Miss Stewart, slightly blushing at her ready apprehension; “I’ll not

deny but you 've made a fair guess. But tell me, how did you find it out—you have not been *seeing* him surely."

"Och!" replied the old woman, shaking her head with a faint and almost ghastly smile; "what I see is between mysel' and Him that sends the sights. But O, darling, for them that has little else on this earth to think o' but yoursel', and that watches every step ye tak', as your blessed mother—God sain her!—wud hae done if she had been spared, it's easy to tell a' this, and more too. Think ye, I haena heard o' the gentleman's coming to Airdruthmore in a cart wi' a broken fut; and since he got better, haena I heard o' his walking out wi' yoursel'; and think ye, my ould ears could be mistain in the lightsome step o' youth, that's just awee stinted by the hurt that's no quite weel yet? Na, na; I wud ken that step for a young sodger's fut-tramp—aye, at half a mile's distance. See ye, maithal, that the heart be as leal, as the tongue's sweet, and the form's fair!"

The significant glance which Isabelle had cast towards her companion while Elsie spoke, was checked by a rising blush, at the pointed allusion contained in the concluding remark; but even this mental emotion appeared to have caught the attention of the acute old woman. "Aye, dear, ye may look and ye may start, but dinna let my words go frae you."

“Indeed, my good woman,” interrupted Tresham, desirous to change the subject, and cover the slight confusion of his companion, “you have amazed me with your acuteness. I do believe you could describe my person as exactly from my voice, as you have told my age and profession from my gait.”

“Stranger !” replied the old woman, impressively raising one of her withered hands, and turning her sightless eyeballs on him, as if she saw his face and could read his soul—“stranger, when it’s the will o’ Him to afflict his creatures, what he takes from them wi’ one hand it’s sometimes his gude pleasure to restore wi’ the other. If he has closed up my eyes, he has quickened my ears and sharpened my touch. Your voice is pleasant to the ear, for it tells o’ a warm and kindly heart ; and fair is the form that utters it. But mind ye the words o’ one who has lived three times your years : the hand o’ fate spares the young and the strong as little as the ould and the weak. The Martinmas blast uproots both the feckless hazel and the stately pine—the dove and the eagle are alike the prey o’ the fowler—and there’s a thrawn yarn in your weird, young man, that ’ill bring ye into trouble ’ore the winter’s our, if ye dinner look the better to yoursel’.”

“Fye, Elsie !” said Isabelle, “is it you that are forespeaking the stranger ? Is this your west-

country courtesy---your Isle of Skye hospitality? The guest of Airdruthmore might have looked for a better welcome at your hands."

"It never was my father's child, darling," replied Elsie, with affectionate solemnity, to this remonstrance, "that wud lift her voice against the stranger; and the guest of a Stewart may well be welcome to her that eats the Stewart's bread. But woe is to all those who speak not the truth; and how may Elsie speak than as she's bidden? Is 't evil to warn the bird of the snare? or does it wrong the hospitable customs of the Gael, to bid the stranger that's travelling in the mist beware of the rock before him?"

"What, moome, dear! has the dark hour been on you? Have you been seeing any thing of late, that you are so oracular to-day? Has the form of the English stranger had any share in your visions?"

"Child of my heart!" replied the old woman, mournfully shaking her head, "it's me that wud be weel pleased, if it was the will o' the Lord to close the eyes o' the mind as he has done those o' the body---aye, if he wud close them both in the sleep o' death: for little o' joy and muckle o' sorrow do they bring to the weary heart, and sore, sore does it long for rest. But the Lord's will, and his alone, be done!"

“Nay, my dear moome,” said Isabelle, affectionately throwing her arm over the old woman’s shoulder, as she sunk down on one knee beside her, and kindly took one of her withered hands in hers ---“Nay, my dear moome, the dark hour is surely on you *now*, I think. Why should you wish to leave us?”

“And is it you, my darling child, that’s asking me why?” replied Elsie, returning the young lady’s caress with a pressure of her hands, and a faint melancholy smile. “In this weary world, what is there left me but y^oursel’? Husband, bairns, kith, and kin, a’ gone frae me—leaf and branch withered or torn away—and me, a worthless stump, left alone like a forgotten thing! The spring and the summer brings no joy to me. Fair day or foul, what can I do but think on them that’s gone, and wish mysel’ wi’ them! What should I live for? The heart aye torn, and the een aye strained wi’ sights that gars my ould flesh grue—sights o’ sorrow and death! O it’s a sair weird, but it must be borne—it must be borne—and we should na murmur!”

“Ah! I feared there was something wrong, from what Mairack told me yesterday; but she said you was better, dear Elsie, and I hoped it had all passed away.”

“Past awa’! an’ when am I without it, then?” replied the old woman, with an accent more stern than usual, and a slight knitting of her brows. “When is it that I can say, ‘I am at peace!’ But is it for me to be vexing you, darling, wi’ the troubles o’ an ould and miserable creature, every time ye come to say a kind word to your ould moome?”

“Assuredly, my dear moome, it would please me to hear your troubles; because talking of them will lighten, if it cannot relieve them. O I wish you would let good Mr. Ross come here oftener: I am sure his conversation would do you good, when you have been troubled by these wild visions.”

“Mr. Ross, maithal, is a good worthy man, and little do I deserve the trouble he has taken wi’ me; but as little can he do me good. He canna put away what the Lord has sent me, be it for good or for evil--and weel does he know that.”

“No one, Elsie, can tell what earnest prayer and constant supplication at the throne of grace may effect; nor does it become a Christian to despond in such a struggle. But this is a point rather for the good man himself to instruct you on, than for me. Tell me what you have

seen lately—what is it that has thus distressed you?”

“O then! late and long has it been on me, and wi’ me, and never is it from me! Ye asked me how I kenned the stranger’s presence, and I told you truly; ye asked me if his form was ever in my visions,—when—O when, for two months past and more, has it ever been from them? Did I no’ see him lying pale and worn out at the foot o’ the brae where he fell, when he got the hurt he yet feels?—Did I no’ see him brought weet and weary in the cart to the door o’ Airdruthmore house?—and ha’ na I seen him walking wi’ yeresel,’ maithal, in the woods and by the burns?—Aye, and still he was on your *right* hand, darling—an’ ye ken what that says!”

In spite of the fixed attention which Tresham was yielding to the old woman’s words, he was struck with astonishment at the start of Isabelle, who still knelt by Elsie’s side, and at the burning blush which overspread her face as the old woman proceeded.

“What nonsense is this, Elsie!” exclaimed she interrupting her with something like asperity, “I am not surprised that you should have avoided telling me this before, and only wonder you can allow yourself to be moved by it, or to think such fancies worthy of a moment’s attention.”

“ Worthy or unworthy, my dear child,” replied Elsie calmly, “you have heard the truth; believe it for your own sake. Sure enough my head is no’ what it has been, and wild is the work that whiles will be going on there. I sometimes think that the Lord will deprive me of my judgment a’ thegether; for there’s whiles I canna red up what I’ll see;—it’s dark—ow’r dark for me to understand. It’s no’ past three nights syne, that I was sitting in the gloaming late just in this spot. The lassie was awa’ doun to the house, and I was my lone, and a’ was still about me; but the black-bird whiles would gie a clear loud whistle, and the pairtridge was whirritting in the corn doun by; and I was thinking o’ ould times—o’ a’ that I hae seen an’ loved, and that’s gone awa’ for ever. And my heart was heavy, and as dark as thae poor ould een; and I sat wi’ my head on my hands ever sae lang; and a kind o’ dwam came ow’r me, and I heard a sound like a wild rushing rain, an’ a roaring souch o’ wind; and my eyes were opened, an’ I saw a wide and long strath afore me, and a wild tumbling river, and water every where about. An’ many a cry and a groan was there o’ fouk struggling wi’ the waters; and there was weet and streeket corpses, an’ wives an’ lasses crying the coronach over them; but

ochone ! what confusion was there ! it was like the great flood o' Noah itsel'. An' as sure as I'm in this very spot, there was the English gentleman that's aside you there, wrastling in the foamy waters, an' the laird himsel' for going in to help him ; an' I sickened at the sight—and just then up cam' the lassie and lifted me off the grun where I had fa'en, and she thought for a while I was clean past awa'. An' this is God's truth that I'm telling ye, my dear, and have na I good cause to warn him ? But I did na' see *his* corse, that's ae thing," continued she hurriedly, as if speaking to herself ; " an' neither sheet nor shroud was on *him*. An' how could that hae been—and he standing at yon darling's right hand ? Weel, weel ! it's a' dark—a' confusion—it maun be right—the truth maun be out, that's certain ; but it's Providence, an' no' my poor head that maun red it up. An' then, thon wild Ballytully and the rest—O God, hae mercy on a poor auld cretur, and let me keep my senses ! I'm whiles thinking it's a' the work o' the evil one—Lord help me !" and with a fearful shudder, and a sigh almost amounting to a groan, she ceased, and resumed her attitude of tranquil resignation, but with a countenance so pale and exhausted, that Miss Stewart, in real anxiety, lavished on the old woman the most tender attentions.

“ Think no more of these troublesome dreams, my dear moome. I am vexed with myself for urging you to speak of what distresses you—and we must not frighten our guests by evil prophecies ; but how could you know the English stranger in all the confusion you speak of? You have been feverish, Elsie : your spirit has been sick, and we must see to heal it.”

“ Sick, sick has it been, and that the Lord knows !” said the old woman with a groan ; “ but sound enough for a’ that to ken a Sassenach stranger from our own Hieland lads. Never a bonnet, nor a bit o’ the tartan had he, but a brown short coat, an’ a black hat ; and his face—the voice o’ the gentleman by your side, maithal, comes from that very face and no other ;—and if God gave me back my sight this blessed moment, I wud ken it among a thousand ! but ochone ! have na’ I told ye, that I have seen it for months past ?”

Much struck with the singular scene he had witnessed, and not only surprised but unspeakably gratified by the obvious interest and embarrassment betrayed by Isabelle at those parts of it which related to himself, Tresham would fain have prolonged the visit and the dialogue, but Isabelle had already risen, and seemed impatient to be gone. He therefore advanced towards the

prophetess with his purse in his hand. "Here, my good mother," said he, "take this trifle, and try if you can discover some good as well as evil in the Sassenach's wierd, as you call it. If there must be danger, there may yet be success: for honour and fortune and happiness, are the rewards of peril and enterprise."

"And if ye could read the weird that I hae spaed for ye, it's strange if it wud na' content ye, stranger," replied the old woman, drawing herself up with considerable dignity. "For your good will I give you thanks, but the miserable old creature that's afore you, wi' one fut in the grave, needs neither your charity nor bounty. Whatever is shown to me, for others' sake, and for good reasons no doubt, that, and neither less nor more, do I declare. For the bit and the sup, and the clothes, and the fire that this frail, withered body may want, while the Lord keeps it an' life thegither, there's one aside you that has long supplied them, and will do so still; and never will Elsie Macleod be beholden to another, nor receive from living man the thing she does na' need."

"And never, my dear moome, while Isabelle Stewart lives, shall you require to do so," interrupted the young lady hastily, and in some confusion as it seemed; "Mr. Tresham meant but to give you a proof of his sympathy and respect, cer-

tainly not to offend you. And now, Elsie, we must leave you; keep up your spirits, my good old moome, and don't let these day-dreams weigh so heavy on your mind. Mr. Ross shall soon call upon you, and will do you good, I'm sure; and I'll send you the tea and sugar, and the flannels I promised you, to-morrow.

With these words Miss Stewart pressed the old woman's hand, and giving a sign to her companion, tripped away with so much haste, that Tresham could not help remarking how anxious she was to terminate the colloquy. The reason of this he was unable to comprehend; but the fact was obvious, and coupling it with other trifling incidents which had that day come under his notice, with the quick apprehension of a lover, he conceived that he was himself in some shape or other concerned. He resolved therefore to be vigilant that no means of gratifying his *curiosity*—for as yet he admitted it to be no more—might be lost by any carelessness of his own.

“What do you think of my sybil, Mr. Tresham?” was Miss Stewart's first question, after they had walked a considerable way from the cottage in silence, each, no doubt, occupied with interesting cogitations.

“She is a singular person, undoubtedly—very singular—very extraordinary!” replied Tresham;

“pray who and what is she?—is her connexion with yourself or the family more close than that of mistress and servant? The interest she seems to take in you, would argue some strong and peculiar bond of sympathy.”

“The tie of master and servant,” replied Miss Stewart, “does certainly in the Highlands give rise to attachments as strong and enduring as that which binds old Elsie to our family; but neither her love to me, nor the interest we feel in her, arises solely from that source. She was the mother of my poor sister’s nurse; it was herself that served in place of nurse—almost of mother—to myself; and had I in reality been nourished by her, she could not love me more. She adored my poor mother, and would supply her place to me if she could. It would seem, indeed, as if she sometimes conceived herself in reality her representative, for she frequently favours me with long and very affectionate advice.—Poor Elsie, she means well at least!”

“But what was that strange dream, or vision, she talked of?—I could scarcely understand what she meant to be at.”

“So much the better, Mr. Tresham,” replied the young lady, her face again suffused with more than ordinary colour; “depend upon it you are just as well in ignorance, for neither you nor

any one else perhaps might be able to give shape, colour or consistence to Elsie's fancies."

"I fear your well-meant attempt at dissuasion will not entirely lull my curiosity to sleep. I remember you called her a sybil—does she pretend to the gift of prophecy then?"

"I see you are resolved to know all about it," replied Miss Stewart, recovering herself, and smiling, although with somewhat of a mortified tone; "I see that I must expose poor Elsie's failing to you. Your confinement to the house can alone account for having lived so long in Strath Einort, without having heard of the fame of Elsie Macleod, the *seer* or *taishtear* of the glen. My good *moome* is one of those persons endowed with that singular faculty of foreseeing and foretelling future events, which is called the *second sight*; and strange as it may sound," continued the young lady, with a sudden expression of solemnity, which did not pass unobserved, "the instances of her correctness in these predictions are so numerous, and so remarkable, as to have procured her very general credit as a highly-gifted seer."

"And is it possible," exclaimed Tresham, with unfeigned astonishment, "that even in these remote districts so strange a delusion can yet exist?" As he said this, he turned instinctively towards

his companion, and saw with increased surprise that her cheek was once more suffused with blushes. Imagining that this embarrassment might have been occasioned by some expression of his, he attempted an explanation of his words; but the momentary confusion had already passed away, and Miss Stewart replied with a smile,

“The delusion, as you term it, Mr. Tresham, is by no means, I assure you, confined to this quarter of the Highlands; in fact it prevails here to a much less extent than in many other parts, for seers are very uncommon here; whereas, in the West Highlands, and particularly among the Hebrides, they are even now to be frequently met with; formerly, as you may have heard, if the subject ever attracted your notice, the possession of this faculty was common in those places.”

“Why, I certainly have heard of what you call second sight,” replied Tresham, “but never considered it as other than a delusion; scarcely more worthy of attention than witchcraft, the existence of fairies, or any such visionary fancy. But you, Miss Stewart, seem to treat the matter with more gravity than I should have expected; surely you are no believer in these creatures of the imagination?”

“Why to tell you the truth, Mr. Tresham, “silly as it may seem, I feel some difficulty in

replying to your question. I am not insensible to its remonstrative tone, but I do not choose to be swayed by the threatened ridicule implied in it. There are few very popular superstitions which may not be traced to some substantial foundation; at least such as have satisfied the minds of some philosophers, and staggered the scepticism of others. Many wise and learned men, whose judgments on other subjects carry weight, have paused at denying the reality of supernatural appearances. Johnson and Bacon, you know, believed in apparitions; we have grave legal enactments against witchcraft; and the voices of hundreds would join in detailing and attesting a multitude of facts corroborative of the existence of second sight; an existence which that same Dr. Johnson could not, and did not deny."

"You surprise me, Miss Stewart, I must say. That the illiterate and superstitious peasantry of the Highlands—aye, and even some of their scarcely more enlightened lairds and chiefs—excuse me for the word—should believe in such gross fables, is quite intelligible; nay, it is natural, for it is the faith they were born in. But that any intelligent person, who has enjoyed the advantage of a liberal education, should continue in such a belief, is, I own it, to me so singular, that I can

scarcely believe you serious, when you treat the matter gravely."

"Perhaps you take me up more seriously than the case deserves," replied Miss Stewart, smiling; "for you will remark, I have committed *myself* to no opinion, though I have alluded to those of others; but I do not intend arguing the point at present. I leave it to its own merits, and to the tacit influence of my old moome, when you shall have seen more of her; which, if I read your curiosity aright, will, I conjecture, be the case. But if you have a mind to hear the subject more fully discussed, and more ably treated than I could do, our friend, Mr. Ross, the minister, who dines with us to-day will, I dare say, give you his sentiments regarding it; and if, after being fairly exposed to the operation of these agents, you retain your prejudices against the existence of second sight, I shall give up the point, and pronounce you an incorrigible infidel, without one spark of Highland fire in your whole constitution, however you may affect it."

"A heavy denunciation assuredly, and one I must even strain my conscience to avoid. I shall lend a willing ear to the charmer, you may depend upon it; but in the meantime, do let me know something more about your prophetess."

“The story of old Elsie, and her connexion with our family,” replied Miss Stewart, “is singular in itself, but as it bears no small reference to the very subject we have been talking of, I scarcely know whether I should tell it you or not. You will be sceptical I know; and, I dare say, will only add me to the list of those you consider as credulous and superstitious.”

“Nay, Miss Stewart, you must not be so severe, such terms can never apply to you; give me, at least, an opportunity of becoming your convert; my scepticism will scarcely withstand the facts and arguments that have convinced your own good sense.”

“Ah, you know I *am* one of the weak superstitious Highlanders, whom you can excuse for being credulous; nay, never deny it; but I trust to Mr. Ross for your conversion, and in the mean time you shall hear Elsie’s story, and judge for yourself.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE SYBIL'S STORY.

I saw the sight—the voice I heard,—
This is the fatal hour,
And there they in their blood will lie,
Maugre all human power.

Mistress, go on, and I will follow thee
To the last gasp with truth and loyalty.

“ You are aware that I have a brother, several years older than myself, a lieutenant in the navy, and at present upon foreign service. He was my mother's first-born child, and, being resolved to perform what she conceived to be a mother's duty, she nursed him herself, until her health sunk under an exertion to which she was unequal. He was prematurely weaned, and the medical men prohibited my mother from making such another attempt in future; but several years elapsed before a proba-

bility appeared of her having any temptation to transgress their injunction.

“ It was some months before the birth of my eldest sister, who died at an early age, that my mother accompanied my father to visit a relative of his own, residing in the parish of Sleat, in the Isle of Skye. The summer and beginning of autumn had already passed away, before my father could leave Airdruthmore, and as he journeyed in the old Highland fashion, paying visits to many of his friends on the way—for he is widely known in the Highlands, Mr. Tresham, and highly respected and loved where known,—the month of September was well advanced before he reached the wild and very romantic district of Arasaig, through which his arrangements required him to pass; for it was at Loch-na-Gaul he purposed taking boat for Armadale in Skye.

“ A tract of weather remarkable for drought, had been succeeded by a broken and uncomfortable fortnight. Heavy showers, with short blinks, though they might add to the magic of the scenery, subjected the travellers to much discomfort, and all the plaids and cloaks they could use were scarce sufficient to protect my mother from the injuries of cold and wet.

“ You have seen something of our Highland country and Highland roads, Mr. Tresham, and

when I tell you that, by all accounts, those of Arasaig were at that time still more toilsome and inconvenient, you will be able to understand not only that the country ponies were the only means of conveyance to be used there, but that even with the best of these, an English lady unaccustomed to such adventures, must have found the journey both fatiguing and dangerous.

“ My excellent mother was a person accustomed, upon principle, to conform to whatever situation it was her fortune to be placed in. Her delight was to gratify her husband, and her pride to show him that she was in every way qualified to be the wife of a Highland laird. But the unwonted and savage character of the country, the inclemency of the weather, and her great comparative distance from home, on this occasion prevailed to a certain degree over a stout and willing heart : her spirits became much affected, and she began to entertain apprehensions of the consequences of fatigue and discomfort, less on her own account than on that of her husband and expected infant. As thus circumstanced they proceeded on their journey, my mother had a singular dream, the effect no doubt of her depressed and anxious state of spirits, and although she was by no means of a superstitious disposition, it made a very strong impression on her imagination ; perhaps you will suppose, that

as she approached the region of these visionary influences, her mind became tingured by the atmosphere which generates them.

“Be this as it may, my mother dreamed that she lay in her own chamber at Airdruthmore, attended by her women and her sick nurse; for the hour of her confinement had come, and her babe was born. Her husband was in the apartment, and on looking around her she also observed the medical gentleman who had formerly attended her, holding up his finger with a threatening gesture, and wearing a face of gloomy displeasure. She well knew the cause of that displeasure, for in her secret soul she had resolved upon breaking through the prohibition which he had imposed on her against nursing her child. But the scene was soon changed, for in the twinkling of an eye she was aware of her comfortable chamber being transformed into a dark miserable hole; the rafters above her were blackened with soot and smoke, like those of some of the wretched bothies in which the inclemency of the weather had more than once forced them to take shelter during their journey; her own attendants were no longer visible, but an old woman was busied about her person, while her babe lay at the bosom of a young female who was stilling its cries and supplying it with fitting nourishment. Displeased at a sight so opposite to

her own intentions she stretched out her arms, and angrily called for her infant. The exertion awoke her, but the impression of her dream, as I have mentioned, remained.

“ Violent gales and rough weather prevented the travellers from proceeding for some days afterwards; but impatient of longer detention, they had taken advantage of a fair hour and clear sky, to proceed along Loch-na-Gaul to the place of their embarkation, when the wind and the clouds arose again, and the rain began to fall so suddenly, that they were forced to take shelter in a miserable and lonely black hut, frequented as a public-house by the fishermen of the district.

“ As they approached this uninviting dwelling, their ears were attracted by the sounds of lamentation. ‘ It is a coronach,’ said my father; ‘ there are women there singing and crying for the dead. It is no place, sure enough, for you, my dear, at any time, and least of all now; but there is no other shelter near, so we must make the best of it.’

“ The rain was by this time beating so hard, and the wind howling so loud around the hut, that what between the wild cries within and the storm without, no answer could be got to the repeated knocks they gave. At length my father raised the latch, and the door gave way to a violent push. He advanced a step or two forward in darkness,

followed by my mother ; when turning towards a dim light, they found themselves at the entrance of a species of den, the character and occupants of which were so much worse than any thing she had yet seen, that the heart of my poor mother sunk within her, and she would almost have preferred committing herself to the howling tempest, to tempting the undiscovered horrors of the place thus revealed to her.

“ The dark smoky atmosphere was made visible, rather than illuminated, by two wretched candles ; the black rafters, and broken ragged beams, supported a low tottering roof of divots, dripping with soot and moisture. In the middle of the floor stood a great flat stone set on end, against which was heaped a pile of peats, the wetness of which had defeated all attempts made to kindle them into a blaze, so that they emitted little more than a dense blue acrid smoke, which curled in thick eddies through every nook and cranny in the room. Rows of salted herrings and dried haddocks, with other piscatory spoils, decorated the beams and walls ; which, however tempting a prospect of winter store they might afford to its inhabitants, added dreadfully to the noisome effluvia of the den ; and pieces of net, cork floats, leaden sinkers, boat-sails, cordage, and other articles of similar description betokening the aquatic occupa-

tions of the people, hung up or lay about in every corner.

“ But these subordinate details were at the time overlooked by the travellers; for their whole attention was absorbed during the short time they stood at the door of this squalid apartment, by the group which occupied its interior. Four or five women and several men, whose appearance was well suited to the scene in which they figured, were clustered round two dead bodies, which, swathed in their plaids and dripping wet, were stretched out upon benches before the fire-place. Of these women, two, apparently inhabitants of the house, were admirable specimens of smoke-dried Highland crones. They were somewhat more than middle aged; both wore the mutch, or head-gear of a married woman, woefully begrimed and dishevelled; their lower persons were clad in coarse brown petticoats of woollen stuff, and scanty plaids or kerchiefs were loosely flung around their shoulders.

“ Do you know, Mr. Tresham,” continued Miss Stewart smiling, “ when I see the disgusting, degraded-looking, filthy creatures, which so often present themselves to the gaze of the traveller at the doors of their miserable black huts in this country, and remember that they are human beings, not only of the same sex, but of the same

species, the same nature, perhaps originally the same intellectual endowments as myself, I cannot help thinking what an excellent lesson of humility the sight affords, if we would so take it, though we cannot be astonished that many of the young and the thoughtless, when they compare these wretched hags with the gay, elegant figures of themselves and their brilliant companions, should forget that both are alike accountable beings, both mortal, and both assuredly to appear before the same Judge, in whose sight age and youth, beauty or ugliness, talent or stupidity, will meet with no distinction apart from virtue and piety."

The animated eye of Tresham looked almost a doubt of this mortifying truth, as he gazed on the lovely female form at his side, and mentally compared it with those of certain hags which his memory furnished him with a recollection of. His reply was a modified dissent from her proposition, upon the ground that mental cultivation does, in fact, confer positive superiority, and is most likely to produce surperior virtue. Miss Stewart shook her head in disapproval of the flattering sophistry, and continued her story.

"There were two among the females of whom I have spoken, of a very different appearance from the rest, and obviously strangers. The one was

aged; her garb, though coarse, was clean and decently arranged, and her countenance, though saddened by grief, bore an expression of intelligence and almost of dignity, which even her fixed and sightless eye-balls could not destroy, and which formed a striking contrast with the hard, dogged features of her companions. The other, a young woman, whose features, still handsome and more delicate than those of her countrywomen in general, were swollen and disfigured by violent anguish, was evidently in a condition which promised that she would soon become a mother. Her gestures indicated the most hopeless despair, and every now and then a cry of anguish would burst from her, and she would throw herself upon one of the bodies and clasp it frantically to her bosom; upon which the rest would raise the howl and continue yelling in concert for awhile, and then one of the women of the place would seize a bottle of whiskey, and distribute a portion to all who chose to partake.

“ ‘ Good God ! how horrible ! ’ exclaimed my poor mother, sickening at the unexpected and appalling scene—‘ O take me any where but there—I can’t go there ! ’—and staggering back, she half fell into the arms of my father, who had turned to prevent her from approaching. He bore her towards the entrance, but observing a further re-

cess in the other end of the house, and the violent rush of the rain without, reminding him that however humble the shelter, it was not to be lightly abandoned, he carried her to a sort of crib filled with dry fern, which seemed intended for a bed, and placing her upon it, wrapped her up in a tartan cloak, while he proceeded to rouse, if he could, some of the inhabitants.

“Nothing, I have heard my father declare, could be more comfortless and dreary than the den into which they had thus been forced to enter. Dark and dismal, a hole in the roof served to admit the rain as well as to emit the smoke, which curling through the imperfect partition, made its way from the chief apartment of the house. Floor there was none; wet straw or fern, thrown under foot to rot and turn to manure, filled several holes in the gravel among which the travellers stumbled as they groped their way; and their organs of smell were offended by a compound of villainous odours which saluted them from every corner of the apartment. Of these, the least disgusting was that which proceeded from the litter of a cow which chewed her cud in a corner, scarcely separated in any way from the place where they were; yet that this place was actually one of the dormitories of the family, was obvious from the variety of odd-shaped cribs,

which, as the eye became accustomed to the darkness, became perceptible in several holes and crannies of the walls.

“To awaken any of the inhabitants to a sense of the wants of their involuntary guest, proved no easy matter. After many vain attempts, one of the viragos first mentioned, at length came forth, bottle and glass in hand, and followed my father into the den where my mother was lying; but, ‘*Goh shee Drammah? goh shee wishkapeh?*’ (will you have a dram? will ye take whiskey?) was all she could be got to say; and, suiting the action to the word, by pouring one out and offering it, was the only demonstration of service she seemed disposed to make.

“A few words in Gaelic from my father, explaining their situation, had some effect in fixing her attention. ‘*Peanuich me!*’ bless me! cried she, also in Gaelic, ‘neither light nor fire!’ and out she rushed, to return with a whole armful of half-kindled, smoking peats, which in spite of my father’s remonstrances, she threw down upon a sort of hearth near the end of the room, as if she had meant to smother the strangers by way of welcome. Then with her petticoats she fanned the unwilling fuel into a flame, which served but to show still more the utter wretchedness of the place.

“Two or three torches of bog pine were next

lighted and stuck in various parts of the room, and the woman then repeated her tender of the usual refreshment to my mother, pressing it with a hideous, though good-natured smile, and many Gaelic recommendations. But cold and wet and the alarm she had encountered, had produced so severe a constitutional shock upon my poor mother, that she was seized with a shivering fit and every indication of becoming extremely unwell. This was explained to the woman, who only wrung her hands, in ignorance, it seemed, of what further was to be done. What she lacked in skill, she sought to make up in bustle; and on my father requesting her to see what additions she could make to the comfort of the apartment, she called aloud upon a lass who was in the next room, sent her for more peats, stuffed a wisp of dry fern into one hole, a bundle of old net into another, strewed some fresh and dry litter over the wet floor, and taking a large old sail from the place where it lay in a corner, with my father's assistance got it stretched like a curtain across the end of the room, so as to insulate a part of it, and defend it from the blasts that still howled through a thousand openings.

“When her arrangements were as complete as she could make them, the woman cast another look, in which pity and embarrassment strove to-

gether, at my poor mother, who still lay shivering and writhing on her bed of straw. ‘Ochone! ochone! puir lady! puir lady!’ she exclaimed; and then, as if some sudden thought had struck her, she hurried out of the room. In a few minutes she returned, accompanied by the blind female stranger, who, scarcely led by her companion, advanced towards my mother, and fixed her sightless eye-balls upon her, knitting her brows with an expression of anxious scrutiny, which might have deceived a stranger into the idea that she saw. ‘Aye,’ said she in tolerable English, and after a moment’s pause, ‘I ken’t it wud be so—it’s the Lord that has sent you to this house of sorrow and misery, and in his name I bid ye welcome, lady, to the shelter it can give.’ ‘A house of sorrow and misery indeed!’ said my mother shuddering; ‘but who are you that bid me welcome, good woman, and in my own language too?’ ‘A desolate and distressed widow,’ replied the woman, ‘whom God, whose name be praised, has seen fit to visit sorely in many ways; but it’s no’ of mysel’ I wud be speaking just now—your own necessities are worse than mine, lady—ye’re ow’r tender a plant to bide such blasts as these.’ A few words to the lassie brought in a load of coarse bed clothes—‘Ye canna be ben the house, lady,’ said her new friend; ‘the streekit corpse

and the mourning widow are ill company for her that hopes to be a mother ; but the best that this miserable place affords, and that the poor folk that have it can give, will be at your orders ; and blind though I be, mysel' will stay wi' you and tend you—poor and ould as I am, ye'll no' be the first laird's lady that Elsie Macleod has waited on in sickness and in health.'

“ So pleasant is the voice of kindness in distress, that the words of this stranger woman, old and blind as she was, inspired my mother with a degree of confidence which she did not believe she could have felt in so dismal a place. She accepted the proffered assistance ; the girl by her directions shook up the coarse fern bed from which she rose, smoothed it down with fresh litter, then spreading sundry blankets, and placing a pillow of feathers at the head, covered the whole with very coarse but clean sheets. Another pile of blankets completed the arrangement ; and my mother, comforted by the unexpected decency of the preparations for her accommodation, more readily committed herself to the guidance of those who appeared so opportunely to her aid. A warm draft, compounded by the old woman's directions, in which the notable Highland specific, whiskey, made no small figure, was then exhibited,

and my mother was left to repose herself, an injunction strenuously seconded by my father.

“ In the meantime the lamentation for the dead continued until near evening, when a number of persons having arrived for the purpose, the bodies were removed in due form to the place where they were to be regularly *waked* and buried, and the hut was left to quietness and almost to solitude; for no one remained in it, except the woman of the place, and Elsie Macleod, who deaf to every representation of the mourners, refused to quit my mother, insisting that she knew her place—that she had a *call* to be there.

“ By the following morning, the feverish agitation which had oppressed my mother had given way under the influence of a refreshing sleep, in spite of her miserable accommodations. But it was not until a brilliant afternoon had revived every thing around them, that my father would permit her to leave her humble lodgings, and proceed a few miles further to the place where they were to embark for Skye.

“ In the meantime my mother had questioned her self-constituted assistant, Elsie, and obtained some account of herself and her companion, who was, it appeared, her only daughter. The substance of what she learned at that time, and

afterwards, from the old woman, was briefly as follows:—

“ Elsie Macleod was born upon the estate of the chief of that name, and married a clansman, by whom she became the mother of several children, only two of whom arrived at the age of womanhood. At an early age, she had attracted the notice of a married lady of Skye, who took her into her own family, and to one of whose children she afterwards served as nurse. The same lady had also taken her to Edinburgh, and even to London; but misfortunes and death having destroyed or dispersed the family of her protectress, Elsie returned to her native place, where, after the loss of her husband, she lived in very straightened circumstances until her daughters grew up.

“ The youngest of these daughters met with a very unhappy fate, the circumstances of which she never was willing to detail, and we have never pressed her to do so. The eldest, by name Mary, increased in years and comeliness, until at length her beauty attracted the addresses of a young and thriving drover, Ewen Mac Donald, to whom she had been scarcely married a year, when he was obliged, in the course of his business, to drive some cattle to England.

“ Among the peculiar faculties of Elsie Mac-

leod, there was one which she constantly deplored as the source of greater misery than all the misfortunes which have assailed her in her earthly pilgrimage. She was a *taishtear*, or *seer*; that is, she was possessed of the singular and mysterious power which is usually denominated the ‘second sight.’ Symptoms of this unwelcome attribute had evinced themselves in Elsie at an early age. Her childhood had even been saddened by its visionary terrors; but it is remarkable that she never was in full possession of its powers, until some years subsequent to her marriage, when, soon after her return to Skye, a double misfortune befel her. She was seized with an illness, which terminated in total blindness. Her own account of the matter was, that in consequence of the death of a favourite infant, she had suffered much from low spirits for some weeks, and that one day, while looking after her cow, which had strayed towards a dark, lonesome glen, a short way from the cottage, she had been seized with a shivering fit which terminated in a swoon. That during its continuance she had felt as if surrounded by numberless, indescribable creatures; how she returned to the house she could not tell; but she was found at the threshold of her own door apparently insensible.

“ She was carried at once to bed, and a tedious

illness was the consequence. From this she recovered, as I have already mentioned, with the loss of her eye-sight; but it soon appeared that the glimmering and uncertain visions which formerly visited her, were exchanged for the full and complete faculty of *taishtearach*, or second sight, in all its perfection.

“ From that time forth Elsie became remarkable as the most accomplished seer of the district—a most unenviable distinction. For ever after, she had twice to bewail the loss of each child or kinsman; once when prognosticated by her own gloomy visions, and again when these visions were accomplished. Scarcely a death or funeral occurred in the parish without some intimation, more or less distinct, being given by Elsie Macleod of its approach. And the occasional glimpses which she enjoyed of more pleasing events were far from being an equivalent for the misery which her more frequent tragical presages inflicted.

“ Even the period of her daughter’s courtship was imbittered by vague and indefinite forebodings; and though nothing could be objected either to the character or circumstances of the lover, and although Elsie herself, from the same mysterious source, was assured that the marriage must and would take place, she more than once gave a so-

lemn warning to her daughter to prepare for woe and misery, if she should resolve to take him as a husband. When at length the marriage did take place, and when the congratulations of friends and neighbours were offered as usual to the parent, Elsie only shook her head in return ; and those who best knew her, forbore to press her to a declaration of the nature of her fears.

“ At the time when the young drover took leave of his wife, and commenced his journey, the mother-in-law warned him emphatically to curb his impatient temper, and to beware at least of *wind* and *water* on his journey ; to which he sportively replied, ‘ No fear, mother ; the next time we meet I ’se warrant ye ’ll no’ tax me wi’ rashness ; and as for *wind* and *water*, I doubt it ’s no’ them I have to fear.’

“ During the whole period of the young man’s absence, the spirits of Elsie continued unusually low, until one evening about the time when his return was expected, as she was sitting on a settle by the fire, she suddenly started, screamed, and threw herself backwards in terrible convulsions, but seeking still to cover her darkened eyes with her hands. Those who were near ran to her assistance, raised, and tried to soothe her, for they knew that the dark hour was on her, and no one dared to ask her a question. She continued to

struggle for awhile, exclaiming, ‘Take them away!—take them away!’ and some considerable time elapsed before she returned to perfect consciousness, exhausted, pale, and shuddering with horror.

“To her daughter she preserved a scrupulous silence regarding this visitation; but to some of her older and more discreet neighbours, she declared that at the moment when the fit commenced, her sight had returned to her as perfectly as ever she had enjoyed it; that she appeared to be in a house on the sea shore, the sea itself being violently agitated; and that she saw a crowd of persons coming up from its banks bearing with them two burthens, which they deposited upon the floor of the hut. That these burthens were the dripping corpses of two men; the one that of a stranger, the other so disfigured in face, that she could not distinguish the features, but it was *born in upon her* that it was the body of her son-in-law; ‘and as sure as the sun is in heaven,’ she added ‘Ewen Macdonald will be a drowned corpse afore the month be out.’

“A few days after this circumstance, a young man who had been Ewen’s companion on his journey, called at Elsie’s cottage, and delivered a message from him to the effect that he had returned, after a successful trip, as far as Fort William,

where he had been detained on business, but would by a particular day, without fail, be at Loch-na-Gaul, and take the ferry from thence to Armadale on his way home.

“ ‘Then,’ immediately exclaimed Elsie, ‘if Mary would ever see her husband more, dead or alive, let her be in Arasaig by that day.’ And, without betraying her worst fears, she found little difficulty in persuading her daughter to take a journey into Arasaig to meet him.

“But to enable her daughter to pay the last duties to her husband, as she felt convinced would be required, was not the sole object which Elsie had in this expedition. The desolate condition not only of herself and her daughter, but also of the infant which was soon expected to see the light, in case her melancholy predictions should be accomplished, bore heavily upon her more experienced mind; but she had a glimmering of hope in this painful anticipation, although grounded upon no surer basis than her own gloomy prophecy. She declared that in the same vision which announced the fate of her son-in-law, a lady had come to the hut where he was laid out, and in great distress had held towards her a new-born infant, which she received, and gave into the hands of her daughter. And from this she persuaded herself that all those ties of affectionate

regard and protection which in Highland families arise out of the connexion of nurse and foster-child, awaited herself and her daughter at Arasaig.

“ I dare say, Mr. Tresham, you may be sceptical as to the truth of what I have related. I think I see a lurking spice of satire upon the curl of that lip of yours, which lets out such a secret. Nay, I know all you would say—that you have no doubt whatever of *my* veracity—that whatever doubt you may entertain, attaches to the possibility of delusion in others—to the powerful operation of imagination—to the length of time that has passed since the events in question, in the course of which *tradition* may have greatly changed their colouring, &c. &c. Of all that I am fully aware, and neither affirm nor deny any thing but the *facts*; and those I have still to relate will perhaps be found to draw still more largely on your faith.

“ Elsie and her daughter reached Armadale, and, in spite of somewhat rough weather, crossed the sound in safety, although their boat was driven from its course to a point from whence they were just able to make the hut, of which I have already said so much. But they soon saw that the wind, which, though tempestuous, to them was almost fair, had been fatal to others; for as they made

the point of rock which sheltered the landing-place, they perceived several people busily engaged on the beach, and ere they themselves landed, they could distinguish carried up to the hut the bodies of two men. The exclamation of the people in the boat with her, startled Elsie, and the truth instantly rushed upon her. ‘My daughter!’ said she, as they reached the shore, ‘does not your heart feel for the bereaved widows, or childless mothers, which this day and hour’s work may have made?’

“ ‘O, God knows I do that,’ was Mary’s reply, with a groan and a thrill of dread that went to her very soul. ‘It is only Him that knows how soon I may be one mysel’.

“ ‘It is only Him, indeed, my child; and he alone can give you strength to bear the worst, if it should be *his* will to ordain it,’ replied her mother, in solemn accents.

“ ‘Mother!—O, mother!’ exclaimed Mary, gasping for breath, ‘I ken ow’r weel that ye see many a dismal sight—tell me—tell me, for God’s sake! hae ye seen the corpse o’ Ewen Macdonald—o’ *my* Ewen? Tell me, is yon it? But why do I ask—I maun see it mysel’.

“ ‘Stay, Mary, dear—have patience: I may doubt and I may dread, but if it’s the will o’ God I may be mistaen. Be quiet, my own child—wait

the will o' Heaven. Mischance aye comes soon enough without our seeking.'

"She spoke thus more to lengthen out the time, that the shock might fall more lightly on her daughter, than from any hope she really felt upon the subject. But Mary could bear suspense no longer: she darted from the spot, and ran with the speed of lightning to the house, whither they had now conveyed the ghastly burthens, and were just placing them on the floor. 'Who is it—O! who is—O, for God sake, tell me,' exclaimed the poor girl, and the men started as they gazed upon her disordered figure and agitated face. They suspected the truth, and with a kindly feeling of consideration would have closed round the bodies to hide them from her view; but with one frantic effort, she burst through them. The dreadfully mutilated countenance might have misled one less keenly interested, but the instinct of affection was not to be deceived. Mary knew her husband's form, disfigured as it was, and with a fearful shriek threw herself upon the body.

"It was not until the first gust of anguish had a little subsided, that the two desolate women became acquainted with the circumstances which had made the one a widow, and deprived the other of her best earthly support. One of the men, who had escaped from the disaster which had proved

fatal to Macdonald, explained, that the young drover, having reached Arasaig late on the preceding night, would have instantly taken boat for Skye. Not finding others so impatient as himself, however, he had been forced to wait till morning, when, bribing the owner of a small fishing skiff to put to sea in defiance of the weather, they had stretched out to make the best of their way to Skye. The wind proved both violent and contrary, and in spite of their exertions, the boat had been driven back, and in a squall was forced against a reef of rocks, where she was upset, and Ewen Macdonald, notwithstanding his being a good swimmer, was swept away by a strong eddy, and dashed against the sharp rocks, until mangled in the dreadful manner they had seen. ‘Ochanie!’ groaned the old mother, as she related this catastrophe, ‘and had na I cause to warn him, poor fellow, against wind and water, and a froward spirit? but it was the Lord’s will! and what are we, that we should seek to counter it?’ It was on the evening of this painful day that my father and mother arrived at this same hut on the beach, ‘and, said Elsie, ‘ye had na been five minutes in the house ’ore I kent it; and weel is it seen that it was the Lord’s doing, blessed be his name,—Amen!’

“ You know, Mr. Tresham, that it has been

said of prophecies, that they are frequently the means of their own fulfilment. The singular and impressive circumstances of the adventure, and the striking coincidence between my mother's dream and old Elsie's vision, together with the opportune aid which she had been enabled to render in the hour of need, and the forlorn situation of herself and daughter, all operated so forcibly on my mother's mind, that she resolved not only to assist, but to attach them to herself; and she received her husband's permission to offer them a dwelling-place at Airdruthmore, whither in due course of time they arrived.

“ When the period of my mother's confinement drew nigh, the expediency of engaging a nurse for her infant was again strongly urged upon her; but she obstinately refused to entrust a hireling with the charge which she held to be the privilege, as well as the duty, of a mother alone. Thus no provision of the kind was made, and it was only when extreme illness convinced her of the danger of the attempt both to her child and to herself, that she regretted her obstinacy. In this emergency the daughter of Elsie Macleod, who had been confined not ten days before her, was brought forward as one well calculated to supply the want, and she became the regularly constituted nurse of my sister. But her own health had

received a fatal shock from the dreadful scene to which she had been exposed, and she did not long survive the period at which my sister was weaned. Perhaps, alas ! to the infirm health of her nurse might be owing, in part at least, the feebleness of constitution which occasioned my poor sister to become the victim of an attack, from which at first no evil consequences were dreaded.

“ This heavy additional calamity, by depriving poor Elsie of her last remaining stay, was a further and most cogent reason for the continuance of our protection ; and grateful indeed was she for it. Blind though she was, her quickness of apprehension, her intelligence and zeal, were so great, that in spite of that perplexing defect, she contrived to make herself useful. She was never either an incumbrance or a burthen ; on the contrary, she was for ever flitting about the house, of which she soon knew every creek and corner, and employed in some good office or another which she found to perform ; and while her health and strength remained, even *your* friend, old Grizzie, Mr. Tresham, who is not remarkable for her tolerance of stray inmates in her kitchen, acknowledged, that ‘ there was many a one wi’ two eyes that did worse nor ould Elsie wi’ none.’

“ The time at length arrived, when I was to make my appearance on this world of sorrow.

well may I call it so, since it pleased the Almighty, that the very hour which gave me life, should cause the death of my excellent mother. I was born, and she scarcely lived to see and bless her child. In the distress and confusion of that hour, my father, bowed down to the earth with grief, and all the household distracted with the calamity which had stricken them, the miserable cause of that calamity experienced but an inhospitable reception on its entrance into this vale of tears, and might possibly have soon lost the dear-bought life it had so lately acquired, had it not been for old Elsie. She, as a favoured dependant, had been present with my mother in her hour of trial and of death; and when she perceived that in the wreck of the parent plant, the fate of its young and fragile bud was entirely overlooked, she took it to her own aged bosom, tended it, and by dint of reproach and entreaty, contrived to procure for it what was needful for its existence, and even for its comforts, until the minds of others were in a condition to attend to it. A suitable nurse was then sought for; but in a remote Highland glen, it is not always that such needful appliances are to be found: the daughter of sorrow, prematurely called into existence, could scarcely be provided for as the long-expected child of joy and safety.

“ In the meantime, I did remarkably well with my old nurse. She had succeeded in hushing my wailings, and furnishing me with nutriment, which not only satisfied the cravings of my appetite, but preserved my health ; and while the rest of the household were occupied with the clamorous lamentations of a Highland funeral, old Elsie testified her attachment and regret for the dead, by the most anxious care of her offspring. To a more fitting nurse, Elsie would readily have yielded the care of the infant of her benefactress ; but when she knew that no one suitably qualified was to be found, she entreated to be left in charge of what was already thriving under her management ; and my father, almost reckless of the result, consented. A young girl was appointed to attend upon Elsie and me, and to supply those deficiencies to which the loss of sight, notwithstanding her wonderful acuteness, could not fail to subject her ; and for several years I experienced no other care except the general superintendence which my father and his sister bestowed on me.

“ In time, however, propriety, and the necessity of attending to my education, called for a different arrangement, and Elsie by degrees retired from a charge which her growing infirmities, as well as her other disabilities, rendered her unfit for. She was then established by my father in the cottage

we have just left, where she enjoys every comfort we can procure for her. The place was her own choice, for the perception of Elsie in distinguishing localities is so extraordinary, that a stranger would scarcely credit her utter deprivation of sight. There is not a yard of the ground between her cottage and Airdruthmore, or for a very considerable range around it that she does not know intimately; nor a glen, nor a field, nor a cottage, or *toon*, to which she will not find her way with an intuitive precision as astonishing as it is uncommon. She does not, however, now quit her own home often, but sits sunning herself on fine days as you saw her, enjoying the warmth as if it had a tendency to banish the creeping chill of age, and delighting, as might be thought, in the romantic scene around her.

“From what I have told you, at some length I confess, you will now comprehend the nature of the connexion between old Elsie and our family, and will, I dare say, acknowledge, that it is neither a slight nor a common one, especially as far as I am concerned; and if you yield any credit to what I assure you can be all ‘duly attested,’ although it occurred before my birth, you may also cease to wonder if I do not perfectly disregard or laugh at the prophetic visions of my old *moome*.”

“Thank you a thousand times, Miss Stewart,

for your most interesting narrative; believe me, whatever may be my faith as to the more mysterious and extraordinary parts of it, I feel no inclination to laugh or scoff at it. Well does old Elsie deserve all your affectionate care. And I assure you, I shall look upon her henceforth with a double portion of respect, now that I know the history of her sorrows. As to her prophetic visions, and the credit you claim for them, I really do not know what to say. Were I in mere courtesy to yield the point, and permit you to believe me convinced, I should merit, as I am sure I should receive, your contempt as well as my own. It is not that I doubt in the smallest degree the correctness of all you have alleged, although even *you* have it only upon hearsay—tradition it may almost be termed—nor will I talk of “strange coincidences,” nor attempt clumsy solutions of supernatural appearances upon natural grounds. To deny asserted facts, without being able to disprove them, would be folly; but to root out long received opinions, and to bend the mind to shapes of belief directly contrary to those in which it has been trained, is a matter of no small difficulty. Such effects are only to be produced by the most powerful and direct demonstration. The evidence must be addressed to our own senses—our reason must be convinced, or we can be no true and honest

proselytes. What may happen to me in this interesting country, and this bewitching place, I dare not anticipate; but as yet you must permit me to retain my honesty, and my opinion, *videlicet*, that it seems most unlikely Providence should interpose preternaturally on occasions so trifling as those which are commonly the subject of these pretended visions, especially since they do not come as useful and available warnings, but as intimations of events which can neither be modified nor avoided by any exertion of those interested in their occurrence."

"Ah, Mr. Tresham, an appeal to my candour and good sense, you know, must be irresistible; and I fear, however mortifying, I must admit your free agency in matters of belief and opinion, although little complimentary, I dare say, to my own penetration and judgment. Indeed I confess myself almost childish or visionary enough to be annoyed at hearing matters of such deep and powerful interest as supernatural interferences, of whatever description, treated like the ordinary affairs of life, and dragged to the rigid bar of that starched old judge Common Sense, who strips off every hue of romance and shade of mystery, and prates only about reason, and experience, and utility, and so forth;—but come, we may let the matter rest at present—I will meet you in the

lists by-and-bye, with my co-adjutor and ally, Mr. Ross, till then adieu—for here we are at home at last.” Tresham smiled, but it would have been difficult to say whether it was a smile of conscious superiority, or of increasing love and devotion to his fascinating antagonist.

CHAPTER V.

TAISTEARAICHD.

“ And coming events cast their shadows before !”

“ MR. ROSS,” said Miss Stewart, on the very day of the interview we have described in our last chapter, after the cloth had been removed, and the servants withdrawn, “ I have to make my appeal to that offensive and defensive alliance which you admit, I hope, to subsist between us in polemics. I am sorry to inform you that we have got a sceptic among us ; and I am reduced to the necessity of demanding your aid towards the good work of his conversion. Don’t look quite so grave. however : I charge him not with any deficiency of faith in matters of more serious import ; his scepticism, so far as my accusation reaches, is confined to a point on which we Highlanders are, and ought to be, peculiarly sensitive, and one on which I am sure you will readily meet him. You guess what

I mean, perhaps—he impugns the truth and very existence of *taistearaichd*, or second sight, denounces all such visions as idle fancies, and absolutely refuses the smallest credit to any such pretended prefigurings of future events. What say you, Mr. Tresham? Guilty or not guilty upon your honour?”

“Nay, Miss Stewart,” replied Tresham, colouring a little in spite of himself, at this serio-comic attack, “the heresy of which I am accused, is denounced as so grave a crime that I am at a loss how to frame my reply. And if I should even plead guilty, I must throw myself on the mercy of the court, as not having had sufficient notice for preparing my defence.”

“How, not sufficient preparation? when this very morning you were formally challenged to the lists—nay, when you could scarcely be arrested in the tide of eloquence with which you had begun to overwhelm your simple antagonist.”

“I own the challenge,” said Tresham, “nor do I absolutely refuse the gage, even though thus taken somewhat off my guard. But in order to secure to myself a just cause, and the success which may be expected in doing battle for it, I must define precisely the opinion which I purpose to maintain, and it is simply this, that, as the general experience of mankind for a great number

of years, concurs in admitting that miracles and preternatural phænomena have ceased to be manifested on earth, the cause for these providential interventions having, so far as we can tell, previously ceased also, we should be slow in admitting of any exception to a rule so founded in reason and common sense. That, therefore, when we are called on to believe any instance of preternatural agency—that is, of an agency, varying in its nature from those laws by which providence appears to govern the universe, we should, unless upon the most unquestionable evidence, the most stubborn facts, reject it as a deception of the senses, or an imposture; and this the more decidedly, when no sufficient cause, so far as man can discern, can be ascribed for such deviation from the natural course of things.”

“Ah, there you are with your common sense and reason again, Mr. Tresham,” said Miss Stewart, laughing, “but you are in good hands now; Mr. Ross, like our countryman Connal, among the imps of darkness—beg your pardon for the comparison—will give you as good as you bring, or I am sorely mistaken; so having, like some other doughty heroes, set their companions together by the ears, I will return under the cover of the dust I have raised, and leave you to fight it out.”

The gentlemen smiled and each said something gallant to the fair championess, after which Mr. Ross took up the discourse. "Nothing, Mr. Tresham," said he, "can be more judicious, nor more philosophical, than such caution as you have suggested, nor can any reasonable man impugn the opinion you have given either in principle or argument. As a general rule, it is excellent; yet, like all other general rules, it must endure exceptions, and you, I am sure, are too candid to refuse admitting such upon sufficient proof." Tresham bowed. "I will not," resumed Mr. Ross, "attempt at present to examine how dangerously far a very rigid adherence to the restriction you have laid down might carry a speculative mind: such an inquiry might invest a comparatively trivial argument, with a cast of undue solemnity. I would rather, if you please, return to the charges brought against you by your fair accuser. To what, Miss Stewart, do they amount? to what extent does Mr. Tresham carry his sceptical negation?"

"Why, truly, beyond general assertions of disbelief, I have little to adduce; but assuredly he evinced a very suspicious and irreverend contempt for the prophetic powers of the chartered seer of Airdruthmore—my good old nurse Elsie."

"Can this be possible, Mr. Tresham? O monstrous heresy! If you are really guilty of

this, I shall undoubtedly feel bound to take up the sword, or at least the argument, and to fight to the utterance—how say you ?”

“Why, I do certainly disclaim and deny all feeling of disrespect to old Elsie, of whom I have heard so much that is delightful, that I am half inclined to strike up a Platonic attachment with the good old dame. But, without entering any absolute or formal protest against the truth or probability of the prophetic visions attributed to her, I may surely, upon my own principles, yet consistently, I think, with all charity, entertain doubts of the reality of her prophetic powers.”

“You hear, Mr. Ross,” said Miss Stewart, “he confesses his crime !”

“Well, Miss Stewart, but I am open to conviction, I trust; and you have said Mr. Ross is the man to convince me. I would fain hear, then, what is to be said on the subject.”

“Do you mean that you would wish to know my opinions on the subject,” inquired Mr. Ross, “or the attested facts which can be adduced in proof of the existence of second sight, Mr. Tresham ?”

“Why, really, sir, I own I should gladly know what opinion a gentleman of your acknowledged judgment and information may entertain on so

curious a subject, and I should certainly like to hear the facts on which such opinions are founded."

"That is to say, sir," replied Mr. Ross, smiling, "that you would hear my confession of faith on this mysterious subject, as well as the grounds of my belief: well, as our fair hostess has honoured me by putting me forward in the cause, I do not dispute the justness of your expectations. To satisfy it, may be not altogether easy. That there have existed, and do even now exist, in the Highlands of Scotland, certain individuals possessing a faculty by which future events become pictured to their minds, as if presently occurring in their sight, and that from such mysterious visions they can and have predicted those events with remarkable, though varying accuracy, is, I conceive, an indisputable fact; and this much I am constrained to believe, and do believe, as much as I do my own existence. But, if you ask me how this phænomenon is to be explained or accounted for; whether it arises from natural or preternatural causes, what may be the laws of its existence, or why it should appear in one individual rather than another, I own myself utterly unable to reply, or to satisfy either myself or you, in the remotest degree, upon the subject."

"Then you are actually satisfied of the exis-

tence of the faculty, and that it does confer upon its possessor the power of prophecy."

"Not absolutely of prophecy in the full sense of the word, but of predicting, to a limited extent, certain occurrences that are to take place; but by no means *every* thing that will happen, within any given period, nor, generally speaking, the exact period itself of any one predicted event, although a pretty accurate approximation to it, is also often made. To this extent I am actually satisfied that it does exist.

"And have any instances occurred in your own experience, on which this conviction rests?"

"Many; many to myself; many to those on whom I place a reliance only second to that which I repose in my own senses; and thousands might be gathered upon hearsay evidence of more or less value, all of which, at least, confirm the general belief of the fact which prevails throughout the country."

"You would much oblige me by relating some of these, of the truth of which you are yourself convinced."

"I shall very willingly do so, and I shall mention some which are also known to the gentlemen now present here, and who can correct me if I deviate, in any degree, from the truth. At one period of my life," continued Mr. Ross, "I

resided in Skye, where, in addition to the glebe which was attached to my residence, I rented a small farm. A friend from abroad, who had lately returned to Britain, had promised me a visit, and I had just stepped down to the public-house of a little *toon* or village, hard by, and near the sea, to inquire whether any tidings of him had been yet received. There was a group of country people seated round the fire, who made way at my approach, and rising up with the usual Highland salutation, invited me to be seated. Just as I was complying, one of them, the servant of a neighbouring gentleman, suddenly started, gave a heavy convulsive shudder, his eyes rolled, and he dropped on the ground. His companions ran to him, picked him up, and eagerly commenced their inquiries as to what had happened. One of them, who knew that the man was a *taishtear*, desired them all to be quiet, and not to attempt rousing him from the fit till the *dark hour* should be past. They accordingly desisted, but the seer himself exclaimed that he saw the *Deevil* lying a weet corpse by the side of an honest man, in the middle of the floor. All who were present looked around, I assure you, with considerable symptoms of horror and apprehension. Nothing, of course, was to be seen, and the man coming soon to himself, no more was said at the time. Three days afterwards, a

boat coming from Loch Alsh, in which the servant and part of my friend's luggage had embarked for Skye, was upset in a squall; the servant, a negro man, and one of the boatmen were drowned, and their bodies being washed ashore, were brought to the public house and laid down upon the floor, just in the spot where the seer had pointed to. The gentleman himself having come by the shorter ferry of Kyle-rea, reached my house in safety. Now the remarkable circumstance in this instance is, that the man having never seen a negro, could not possibly have conceived the idea of one being laid out there, and we see that he consequently imagined him to be the evil spirit, from his sable hue; even I was ignorant that my friend had a negro servant, so that it was perfectly impossible there could have been collusion or imposture in the business."

"And this happened in your own presence, Mr. Ross?"

"In my own presence, Mr. Tresham; and I knew several other instances in which the same man had similar visions, and predicted like events; but he was not an experienced seer; he could scarcely explain what he saw, unless when the objects were very remarkable indeed. It was as if the mantle of prophetic vision had mistaken its object in lighting on him. Neither were his

visions frequent—he never became celebrated as a seer.”

“ Singular indeed,” said Tresham, musing.

“ It is altogether unaccountable, on any recognized hypothesis or theory,” resumed Mr. Ross; “ such facts must be taken as they are found, for they stand alone upon their own basis, not as matters to reason on, but to be viewed as one of the anomalies, permitted by the great Disposer of events for some good reason inscrutable to us. I own, Mr. Tresham, I was at one time as sceptical as yourself on this subject, and endeavoured to discover some loop-hole, some flaw to countenance the continuance of my disbelief; but I was beat, step by step, from all my strong-holds, by the singular and emphatic accuracy with which every event prognosticated was sooner or later accomplished, and was forced to yield a lingering assent to the truth of what I could neither understand nor account for.”

“ What Mr. Ross has just observed regarding the accuracy with which these visions are often accomplished, is perfectly just,” said Mr. Macpherson, a gentleman who was also at table. “ I remember a curious instance of this myself. The old road from one part of the parish where I resided, some years ago, to the church which I attended, had fallen into disuse, in consequence of the substitu-

tion of a new road in a better line. To complete this road, a bridge had been formed over a stream, which cut off a considerable circuit; and this road had been for many years in general use by all the inhabitants of the parish. In spite of this notorious fact, a seer, who dwelt in a neighbouring hamlet, declared, that returning late one evening towards home, he had seen corpse-lights arise from a cluster of houses about two miles distant, and proceed by the *old* line of road to the churchyard. He was circumstantial enough in his account of the matter, and assured those to whom he mentioned it, that he could distinguish the dusky habiliments of the bearers, and even the coffin itself, borne along and covered with a plaid."

"As I was well known to be a curious inquirer into these matters, the affair was immediately reported to me. I took the pains to examine a little into the circumstances, and remonstrated with the seer upon the improbability that a burial would take any other than the customary highway for getting to the churchyard. But he persisted in his prediction, adding, that I should myself ere long be compelled to acknowledge its truth. Strange as it may seem, that very evening I was requested to go and see a very decent man, a dry stone-mason, who some time before had injured himself so seriously as that his life was

despaired with. I found him in a hopeless state—a vessel had burst in his lungs, and before the night closed in he was suffocated with his own blood.

“The funeral took place after the lapse of the customary time; but it was still more remarkable, that on the preceding day a fall of rain caused so heavy a flood in the stream, as not only to carry off the bridge, but to tear up the new road so grievously, that the funeral was absolutely forced to proceed by the old one as the most practicable of the two, while I waited near the church to witness the procession, and saw it winding along the path described by my prophetic friend, the seer.”

“The instance given by Mr. Macpherson is unquestionably a strong one,” said Mr. Ross, resuming the discourse; “but I think it is surpassed by an event which occurred to myself, which of course I can vouch for in every particular, and which made, I assure you, a very powerful impression upon my mind at the time.

“The climate of Skye is so rainy, Mr. Tresham, as you probably have often heard, that farmers there are always anxious to take advantage of a blink of sunshine to gather in their harvest. One autumn I had gathered together a large band of shearers; and as I was watching the riggs of corn falling fast before them, my attention was

particularly attracted by one young woman, who had advanced far a-head of her companions, and was laughing and cheering them on. The old hands were all loud in her applause, and I could not help remarking to an old *banster* who was near me, ‘What an excellent shearer that girl is—how clean and how well she does her work!’

“ ‘If she shears we’el the day,’ replied the man, ‘she’ll never shear again.’”

“ ‘Aye, Donald,’ said I, struck with the man’s manner, and then first remembering that he had the reputation of being a *seer*—‘what is that you say?’”

“ ‘I said what I say again, sir, she’ll never shear more.’”

“ ‘Why that—what should ail her? The woman seems to be in excellent health—why should she not come to work again?’”

“ ‘We’ll, sir, whatever ye may think, its truth I’m saying; I ken that ye dinna put much belief in thae things; but mind my words, for ye’ll see they’re true—’ore this day eight days that lassie ’ll be a corpse—I seed the winding-sheet high above her middle, it’s no an hour syne; and I never seed that, an’ ken’t them living a week.’”

“ ‘Well, Donald,’ said I, struck by the man’s solemnity, ‘all that may be, and yet you never a bit the better prophet; I have often heard you

foretell such things, and no doubt some of them have come to pass; but, as you say, I have little belief in this same power of second sight. Now here's an opportunity to convince me, perhaps—this woman may die, as you have said, but how am I to know that you really foresaw it?—Give me some token by which I may be made sure of this.'

"The man paused, and his face assumed an anxious expression. He turned—looked this way and that, and was obviously both perplexed and distressed. 'We'el, sir,' replied he at last, 'I dinna just like playing wi' sic things—it's no just canny—but it's no for the like o' me to deny what ye require; so by this token ye'll ken that Donald Mac Allister tells nothing but what he sees. When they go to lift the corpse, to bring it out o' the house, such a man will be at the head, and such and such others will take the right and left shoulders,' mentioning the names of individuals in the neighbourhood, with whom I was well acquainted.

"'Well, Donald,' said I, 'say not a word of all this to any one—there's no need of frightening the poor lassie to death; the event will prove the truth or falsehood of your prediction, and I confess will not be without its effect on my opinion.'

"My conversation with Donald MacAllister, and his solemn warning regarding the poor girl, made

a stronger impression on my mind than I cared to admit, even to myself: and assuredly it was not lessened, when I learned that its unfortunate object, whether from over-exertion on that very day, and being over-heated, or from some other cause, had been taken ill the same night on her return home. I saw her soon after, and nothing in my power was neglected to relieve her; but in spite of every effort to check the fever, it increased so rapidly, that before the seventh day the poor girl was, as the taishtear predicted, a corpse.

“ So remarkable a coincidence was of itself sufficiently startling; but I resolved to carry the proof to the uttermost, and for this purpose I conceived the idea of putting the taishtear in the wrong, at least in one respect. I determined to attend the funeral myself, and as such a compliment would necessarily give me some influence in the arrangements of the ceremony, I purposed to use it in frustrating the predicted positions of the bearers. I offered myself, as one of the mourners, to take up the right shoulder of the corse, when they should carry it from the hearse. My offer was accepted with gratitude, and we all awaited the moment of *lifting*. Just before the signal was given, however, I observed a large dog belonging to one of the party, fly furiously upon a favourite terrier of mine which had accompanied

me to the house, and, alarmed for his safety, I ran to part them. When I returned, I found the corpse had already been lifted, and *the very persons named by the seer* at their respective places, among whom was the man at the right shoulder, who had actually taken the position I purposed to occupy. This occurred to myself: there may be hundreds still living who could testify to the truth of the facts I have related; and I must confess they went a far way to satisfy my mind as to the real existence of second sight.”*

There was a pause of some seconds when Mr. Ross concluded. Tresham was the first to break silence. “Assuredly these are striking narratives,” said he, “and it seems as difficult to refuse credence to what is so authentically vouched, as it is to credit what no man, I think, reasoning by analogy, can

* The whole circumstances of this instance of second sight, precisely as they have been related in the text, were given to the author in the Isle of Skye some twenty years ago, by a gentleman whose credit and strength of mind were beyond all question unimpeachable—they had occurred to himself. There are now living several gentlemen of rank and talent who were present on the occasion when it was related, and some of them, with whom the author has since met, remember the circumstance well. The other instances are all equally authentic, and are related solely, “*Mutato nomine*,” as to place and person.

deny to be contrary to experience and probability."

"But, Mr. Tresham, is the value of human experience, and that which we are pleased to call probability, so supreme in judging even of the more obvious phænomena of nature, that we should on such grounds pretend to place limits to the power of any particular species of agency, natural or supernatural, howsoever we may term it?—It appears, perhaps, unaccountable to us, that a faculty partaking almost of prophecy should be bestowed by the Divine will upon certain illiterate peasants, or even upon some men of better acquirements—a faculty, the use of which we cannot comprehend, because it tends, so far as we can see, to no direct good effect; and I grant that it would be evincing a weak and credulous spirit, if we were to believe its existence upon slight or questionable grounds; but when we find it supported by the concurrent testimony of a very great number of unprejudiced and intelligent witnesses, men who have applied themselves to detect imposture, and to separate the illusions of superstitious enthusiasm from fact; and when facts are brought before us in so clear a shape as to leave us no alternative between belief in their alleged origin, or a union of coincidence and collusion almost more miraculous still, it certainly does appear to me a perversion of

judgment to reject undeniable testimony, in favour of a conclusion not less improbable than the point denied."

"But *is* that conclusion so improbable?" demanded Tresham, in reply. "Is it not more likely that a high degree of illusion should prevail among a superstitious people, than that the laws of nature should be departed from for no adequate object."

"That you or I can perceive, Mr. Tresham, let us add," said Mr. Ross, following up his sentence. "Can you tell me why thousands of insects are permitted to flutter their hour in the sunshine, and die or be brushed away by the rude wind, without being of any obvious service to animate or inanimate creation.—Can you tell why a whole country should be desolated by a storm, or distressed by a track of unseasonable weather which benefits no creature? Can you tell why one child is born an idiot, while another develops such astonishing mental powers as to perform feats which appear miraculous, and then is snatched from the world before these wonderful talents have produced a single valuable result? Can you tell why a rose smells sweet, or why another herb is bitter? or can you give a reason for the slightest fact of hourly occurrence that meets our eyes? These, you will say, are all events in the acknowledged course of nature, although we cannot give reasons why they

are so. But shall we, who witness these phænomena, refuse our credence to another, not more wonderful, not more unaccountable, merely because it is unusual, and according to our limited ideas improbable, even although attested by evidence which, where natural causes are concerned, would be sufficient to remove all doubt? You speak of a high degree of illusion. If you credit my word, and the facts described by me in the last instance I gave, ask yourself whether any degree of illusion could have blinded me on that occasion—whether any imposture or collusion could have produced the completion of the prediction which I there witnessed?”

“I am perfectly sensible of the force of your arguments, and of the fairness of your deductions, Mr. Ross,” replied Tresham; “and I am sure you will believe when I aver my implicit credit in all you have stated, as matter of fact; yet it would be uncandid not to declare my reluctance at admitting the broad conclusion to which your arguments tend. If the reason could be satisfied—if one could feel secure of not rashly yielding our assent upon imperfect grounds, it would be something: one still recurs to the question, what good end can their supposed prophetic faculty produce?”

“I am afraid, Mr. Tresham,” replied Mr. Ross,

“that if we were to resolve upon denying all propositions which cannot be mathematically demonstrated, or proved to the perfect satisfaction of our reason, we should find ourselves involved in a very wide and dangerous field of scepticism. Reason is a proud and pertinacious mistress, and, though undoubtedly given us as a guide to regulate our way, may sometimes, like other human attributes, err from presumption, or from weakness, and mislead the judgment she was intended to direct. I have told you that I was myself very strongly disposed to doubt the existence of the faculty in question, and only yielded to what I considered as the indisputable evidence of my senses; and although I now confess to so much, I also profess my utter ignorance of all beyond the fact. The customary modes of accounting for it are, I think, utterly untenable.”

“But what are these modes?” said Tresham; “I should like to hear them.”

“Why it has been urged that in a rude remote country, far from the usual sources of moral and intellectual improvement, it is by no means improbable that the Almighty should continue, for a longer term than in other places, that miraculous intervention which in the early days of mankind, and even in the dawn of the Christian religion, was comparatively common. That such a frequent

manifestation of the existence of the Deity was useful in keeping up His fear in the hearts of men who would otherwise be apt to relapse into total spiritual darkness and grosser superstitions ; and it has been argued that something of a similar nature was to be traced among many semi-civilized nations ; nay, that the well-attested instances of apparitions recorded in all ages, as having appeared to individuals, equally eminent for their rank as their intelligence, were of a nature very analogous to, and strongly corroborative of, the existence of the faculty in question. Now to me all this seems as weak as it is unsatisfactory ; it is arguing upon disputable grounds, and losing sight of the strong points of the case—the facts, the multitude of striking facts, attested as strongly as they admit of being ; and until the impression made upon my senses by these facts shall be effaced by an exposure of their fallacy, I am content to retain my belief, confessing an utter ignorance of the cause, which is only known to that Almighty being who has ordained this and so many things equally unintelligible to our limited powers of comprehension, yet given, perhaps, as exercises to our faith and our humility. In short, I am very much of the opinion which the learned Dr. Johnson has expressed in talking of this same subject.”

“ And what was that opinion, pray ?”

“ Why, I cannot exactly quote his words, but you will find it in his ‘ Tour to the Hebrides.’ ”

“ I shall be glad to see it; in the meantime, I am at least not unwilling to be convinced, and I may possibly be so before I quit this visionary land.”

“ Take care, Mr. Tresham,” said Miss Stewart: “ remember the fate which sometimes attends infidels; recollect that there is a prophetic denunciation hanging over your own head.”

But scarcely had she spoken, when she stopped in some confusion, for she remembered that the prediction had implied more than it was her wish to allude to. The open unembarrassed laugh of Tresham, however, re-assured her, as he replied, “ Ah, true, I remember that oracular warning—I see you attach more importance to it than I can prevail on myself yet to do; but when any part of that is fulfilled, I shall own myself a perfect convert. But pray, are gloomy events, death and burials, dead corpses and wraiths, the only subjects of this singular species of foresight? are there never any more cheerful visions seen?”

“ O yes, such are by no means unfrequent,” replied Mr. Ross; “ many have been made aware of the coming of strangers or friends, by the second sight, and have thus prepared for their reception ;

future towns, villages, and gardens, have been foreseen, and many a marriage predicted by such means, even before the parties became known to each other."

"Well, that is pleasanter, certainly, and rather more beneficial to society. Do pray cheer us up with a peep at the bright side of the picture. I rather think, Miss Stewart, if I understood your old moome aright, that I had the honour of such a visionary introduction to her before ever I reached Airdruthmore?"

"Well, Mr. Tresham," replied Mr. Ross, "that is no more than was to be expected. Strangers of importance, especially *Sassenachs*, seldom come unannounced when there is a seer in the place—the road by which they are to approach, their horses, garb, and very features, are distinctly described upon the seer's prophetic sense, who, if he does not know the individual, details these particulars, by which the coming guest is either recognized, or known when he makes his appearance. Ships have been seen anchoring in unusual places, and, as I said before, although I by no means vouch for the truth of it, visions of houses and gardens have been seen where nothing but a moor and bog existed, and the truth of the prediction vindicated by their being subsequently placed there."

“ And marriages, Mr. Ross, how are they announced? I suppose the parties are seen in wedding garments? Is it rich or poor, high or low, that are chiefly found the subjects of such happy visions?”

“ O fie, Mr. Tresham, our taishtear is no respecter of persons; the female is seen standing on the left hand of the future bridegroom—it is a prognostic that never fails, they say. She will surely be his bride whether she be clad in silk or in tartan, and whatever obstacles may seem to oppose their union.”

Tresham started; a thrill of excessive emotion shot through his frame, as Mr. Ross, unconscious of the effect of his observations, went on describing the *modus operandi* of the *taishk*, or vision. The confusion of Miss Stewart at the words of old Elsie, and several mysterious circumstances which occurred during that interview, were then alike explained, for Tresham well remembered the old woman's assertion, that she had seen her young mistress standing upon the *left hand* of the young English gentleman. He had the delicacy and presence of mind to cast no look at his mistress, but sought with all his might to compose his own countenance, so as to avoid both her observation and that of others. In this he partly succeeded; but he could not recover the requisite composure of

mind to maintain a conversation which had ceased to interest him. He forced himself to listen and reply, but his senses were pre-occupied. A thousand busy thoughts were rushing into his mind, keeping time with the accelerated current of his blood. His situation became in a moment as new as it was singular; his professed scepticism, which had doubtless been giving way to the repeated attacks that were poured upon it during the late conversation, and probably yielding to the influence of place and circumstance, seemed totally put to the route by this unexpected discovery, and he actually felt as if hurried into the situation of an affianced husband—to one whom he had not as yet seriously addressed. With the unaccountable inconsistency of human nature, his pride revolted at a suggestion which deprived him as it were of all free agency in a matter of such vital importance to his future happiness—and although but an hour before he might have eagerly grasped at its fulfilment, he felt almost shocked, alarmed, at his visionary enthrallment.

The unworthy feeling was but of short duration; the illusion rapidly dissipated, and when at length he ventured to raise his eye to her whose image was already engraven on his heart—when he saw her maiden dignity and loveliness, and marked the open serenity and bright intelligence of her

countenance, every sentiment of security vanished, and he only discerned a being to win whose favour might be the worthy object of his most anxious efforts—with whom, could he but aspire to possess her, his lot in life must be a blessed one.

Thus circumstanced, it is easy to conceive that the conversation languished and soon dropped. The thoughtfulness of Tresham was by most of the company attributed to the impression made upon him by the arguments of Mr. Ross. The young man had neither spirits nor inclination to undeceive them, if he could have done so with entire sincerity, and after sustaining some good-humoured raillery, the debate and the party were both adjourned.

CHAPTER VI.

A HIGHLAND SPATE.

Ochon ! it is a fearfu' nicht !
Sic saw I ne'er before,
Au' fearfu' will it be to all,
I'm erch, or a' be o'er.

Still, still, the water rises, "Haste," they cry,
"O hurry, seamen ! in delay we die !"

THE month of August in the Highlands of Scotland, is frequently as much a month of rain and wind, as of heat and sunshine, and the "Lammas floods" are proverbial for their violence. But the weather had continued marvellously fine for the season at Airdruthmore, and Lammas had come and gone, with a few black looks, and some heavy showers, like a scold that frowns and cries because she can no further vent her fury. The weather-wise folk of the country, the old experienced sages

of the glen, did indeed declare, "that it was *biding* them yet," but day after day rose bright and sunny; August had made its bow, and yellow September began to show his changing tints, yet still the threatened weather-break did not appear.

By this time Tresham, who though entirely recovered of his accident, was still detained by the pressing entreaties of the laird and his own inclination, at Airdruthmore, had begun to enjoy his favourite amusement in the nearer hills, riding to and returning from his ground upon a sure-footed pony. A brilliant day with a fine westerly wind, had tempted him to prepare for an excursion of greater length than usual on the morrow, and in spite of a falling barometer, and the shaking heads of some of the old hands, he persisted in his resolution.

The morning was clear and bright; too clear, for on looking at the distant hills, you might have fancied that you could count the heather tufts upon them, and one or two heavy mist-banks were resting on the blue peaks at the top of the strath. Nothing daunted, however, by appearances that were ominous to the experienced, Tresham, accompanied by a stout Highlander and a lad to hold his pony while he shot or hunted the dogs, proceeded to the hill.

Scarcely had he reached his ground, when the wind, which had died away in the west, began to rise in the north-eastern quarter of the heavens, which speedily became overspread with those filmy clouds, the well known precursors of stormy weather. These were succeeded by a grey haze, which in its turn was effaced with alarming rapidity by heavy, but fast drifting clouds, of a dull, leaden hue. At length came a mizzling rain, which speedily increased in density and size, until it appeared to pour from the scud that now filled the whole lower part of the atmosphere, devouring, as it might have been thought, the hill tops, and fast closing in the view on all sides.

Unwilling to return with a poor bag of game, Tresham remained in the hill during these several rapid changes of the weather, until the rain, drifted sharply against his person by a piercing wind, admonished him to lose no time in beating his retreat to a less inclement region. The dark appearance of the higher mountains, when the eye could for a moment penetrate the leaden gloom, betokened a still heavier fall in the more elevated grounds; a fact which was soon placed beyond dispute by the dark brown streams which rolled down every water-course, and which rapidly swelled every burn to a wild torrent, foaming from rock to pool in their headlong descent. Still it

was early in the day, and Tresham, hoping always for a change, was unwilling to bend his steps decidedly homewards; but the look and the words of his experienced attendant decided him. "She'll be a *course** night," said he.

"What? don't you think it will clear, then?" asked Tresham.

"Ou, she'll no' clear the day; see till the hills thonder, and the burns—Lord kens hou we'll cross the big burn—she'll be muckle enough 'ore noo."

"The burn! faith, that's true," responded Tresham; "I forgot the burn;"—and without another moment's delay, he took his course down the hill.

As they proceeded, instead of diminishing, the rain rather increased in heaviness; and by the time they reached the spot where in the morning they had crossed a small stream on stepping stones, they found every thing overwhelmed by a torrent of porter-coloured foam. Blank enough did both Tresham and his guide look as they eyed the rush of waters which was every moment augmenting. "What the deuce is to be done now?" said the former, as he measured the wide space with his eye; "neither horse nor man are equal to this feat."

* Quasi, *coarse*—i. e. stormy.

“Na, na!” said the guide, shaking his head, “she canna gang that way—come awa’—come awa’—this way;” and leading down the stream, they followed its roaring course, until after bounding over a bold ledge of rock into a deep pool, it rushed away in a broader channel, though still with a very furious current. “If she can do’t at a’, this is the bit,” said Donald. “Oich oich, but she’s wild the day. Stop, stop, man! tak’ the baist, tak’ the baist—she’ll keep hur feet better nor hersel’—see, I’ll tak’ the road afore her.” And accordingly, Donald, throwing his plaid tighter across his shoulders, put forth his staff and plunged at once in the fierce water. In a moment it was over the knee—half way up the thigh—leaping up around him with the strength of its current; but shoring himself up with his stick against it, and leading the pony’s bridle with his left hand, he advanced, followed by the stout little animal, which however was snorting with terror.

They had already reached the middle of the stream, when Donald, placing by accident his stick upon a round stone, it gave way under his weight, and Tresham, aghast, saw his guide, uttering a loud cry, whirled away by the fury of the torrent. Still the pony bore gallantly up against the pressure of the water, never raising a foot till the others were secure, and never planting one till

perfectly sure of its ground. Fortunately the guide had let the bridle go when he fell, and so long as there was day light between the pony's belly and the current, it managed well enough to support itself; but as it approached the centre of the stream, the water all at once rose against its side, and Tresham, with a thrill of painful alarm, felt its whole feet give way at once under his person.

Instinctively drawing his feet from the stirrups, he prepared for a swim and a struggle; but just as he thought all was over, and that in order to avoid the danger of entanglement with his horse, he must throw himself from its back, the spirited little creature made a bold spring, and floundering onwards a pace or two, struck ground again in a shallow spot, from whence it managed to reach the opposite bank.

The moment Tresham could turn his eye from his own movements, he cast them down the stream, where he was gladdened by the sight of his guide's bonnet and tartans. The man had been whirled head over heels for many yards, and was hurried over more than one rapid; but after awhile he neared and grappled with the bank, which he fortunately reached unhurt; the gillie had held on by the pony's tail unknown to its rider, and was dragged by it safe to land.

“Heich ! de’il dam’ her, but she most drowned me !” ejaculated Donald, as he issued from the current, dissolving like a river god in a hundred streams, and wringing the water from his plaid and bonnet. “Hoo ! but she’s a muckle spate—De’il a brig ’ill be standing from the one end o’ the strath to the tither, by the morn’s morn, if the rain ’ill be this gait the night.” And when Tresham saw the quiet and moderate Ruth, transformed into a deep, muddy, roaring river, and heard the crashing of the rocks which it rolled along its bed, he was much of Donald’s opinion.

On reaching the grounds about the house, which he did about three o’clock, he had the curiosity to take a look at the wooden bridge, which had been thrown across the Ruth, on the road which went up the strath. The turbid stream had already almost filled the water-way, and every beam and plank was trembling convulsively from the shaking of the banks and the thundering of the current against the centre supports. Trees torn from the banks above, were rolling down, broken and mutilated by the violent friction of the torrent ; and Tresham was sensible that if one of these should get fixed athwart the centre pier, or if it should be struck by one of the heavy rocks that were crashing down like thunder,

the prophecy of Donald, so far as this bridge was concerned, would be speedily accomplished.

On his way to the house he met the laird, wrapped up in his tartan cloak, umbrella in hand, coming out to look after the safety of his property. "Wild work, Mr. Tresham—awful night this, man. Thank Heaven ye're come; Belle and I were beginning to be feared about ye—the waters are out with a vengeance. I see ye've been looking at the bridge—but she'll stand it, sir—she'll stand it; I've seen many a spate like this, and the bridge never a hair the worse."

"I hope it will not suffer more now, sir; but the water is very high, I assure you."

"Aye, faith, it is so,—it's a wild night, by my certie—and the rain's no done yet—and the water is rising fast too." And the anxious looks of the old gentleman betrayed the uneasiness which his words would scarcely allow.

They returned in silence to the house; shifted and prepared for dinner, which was served at the good country hour of half-past five. Just as the party were sitting down, the door opened, and Tresham's servant, a cool, methodical, matter-of-fact John Bull, entered the dining-room with somewhat more of haste, and less of ceremonious respect than was his wont. "Sir," said he, in the

same tone that he would have delivered an ordinary message, "the grieve has his respects, and the burn will be at the house immediately!" Away he bolted, and scarcely had he left the room when a cry of "The burn, the burn!" was heard from many voices, and on running to the door, the whole party saw a turbid shallow torrent come sweeping along the paths and carriage road, at the same time inundating the lawn and surrounding the house and offices.

"Good God, how is this?" exclaimed the laird.

"The brig's doon, an' the water's ow'r her both ways," said one.

"Aye, an' it's a' through the garden, an' the parks doon bye, 'ore this," exclaimed another.

"Ou, mem, mem!" cried a laundry-maid, with coats kilted high, and arms tossed frantically in the air, "a' the napery's gone! twal' pair o' sheets, mem! twunty table cloths, and ten dozen o' napkins—a' gone, mem! they're a' in the Einort 'ore this."

"O losh preserve us! the tea and the sugar! the tea and the sugar! an' a' the soap and the groceries, my lady!" roared Mrs. Grizzie, in a voice of frenzy, her neat mutch cap all awry, and wringing her hands in agony—"they'll a' be washed oot o' the store-room—the water's a fut

deep in 't already!—pity me! pity me!”—and then all the females set up a howling in concert.

“ This must be looked after out of hand,” said the laird; “ stay here, Harry—stay with these women;—I’ll to the bridge, and see what can be done.”

“ No, no!” said Isabelle, “ go, Mr. Tresham—go with my father; the men-servants and ourselves can do all that’s to be done here; but don’t leave my father.” Off set the old man and his young friend towards the point of peril, where they found a scene of rapid and terrible devastation.

The bridge was indeed gone, and in its place stood a wreck of beams, and trees, and bushes, piled high above the channel, and over which the flood was bounding, and foaming, and roaring in a terrible cascade. A large birch tree, uprooted from the tumbling banks above, had stuck athwart the middle support, just as Tresham had dreaded. The water, partially diverted towards the corner of the bulwark, had washed it away, causing the bridge to fall in on that side. Trees, bushes, rubbish, and stones accumulated rapidly; a bank of gravel formed, and threw the stream out of its natural bed, dividing it into three torrents, one of which breaking out on the western side,

tore up the road, broke through a corn field, and rejoined the original channel some five hundred yards below. Another leapt furiously over the bridge, and occupied the natural channel, while the third, bursting forth above the ruined bulwark on the eastern side, swept along by the garden wall, tearing up shrubberies and flower-plots in its way, and ran rapidly towards the house and offices. The stream was terrific. The eye was confounded with the furious torrents, and the ear stunned with their noise, and with the crashing together of enormous rocks which were hurled along like pebbles by the force of the streams. Huge trees were seen tossing their mutilated arms distractedly above the waters, like men drowning in the current. Sometimes they were cast aground upon a shallow, where they wavered for a while like living things groaning and shuddering before they fixed, to arrest others in their turn. In a time inconceivably short, such wrecks would collect a bank of gravel, which turned the force of the current to some fresh quarter, where the same devastation recommenced.

Even Airdruthmore, accustomed as he was to the war of elements in these mountainous regions, gazed at the scene in bewildered amazement. Tresham, though equally aghast, perhaps more used to dangerous emergencies, cast his eyes over

the wreck around him, with the view and the hope of doing some good. He mused a few moments before he called aloud to his companion, "I have it, Airdruthmore—it will do—see you this old wall here?—it retains the waters that are separated from the stream. Let us break it down, throw some bushes into that hollow, cast the stones of the dyke above them, cut this bank a little, and every drop will be turned from the house."

"Ah, my young friend! you know nothing of a Highland burn in a spate. Men ye may command, but this is a wild roaring fiend."

"Never mind, let me try. Hollah! axes—bring axes and picks here!" cried he, to those of the farm servants and tenants who had by this time collected; "here, my lads, come help me down with this wall." The men, who till then had stood gaping idly, because ignorantly and hopelessly, like the honest laird himself, so soon as something was pointed out for them to do, and that they actually saw the young Englishman himself buckle to the work with a will, set to help him. The wall was soon thrown down, and the water instantly, as Tresham had predicted, began to make its way through the breach. "Now down with these aller bushes, and that mountain ash there;—here, drag it across this old road—now

throw on that brushwood,—so, roll these heavy stones on them:—there, that's the way—more, more of them;—we'll get the better of it yet, my lads."

Scarcely had these operations been performed, when their effects became visible. The current impeded, found its way in greater abundance through the channel just opened. A little work with the pick-axes enabled the water to deepen it for itself; the trees and brushwood gathered rubbish and gravel, and in less than half an hour, the water ceased to flow towards the house. To attempt removing the ruined bridge was utterly impracticable; so leaving a man to watch and report the movements of the waters, the chief and his friend proceeded down the stream to its junction with the Einort, in order so see the state of that river, and of the main strath.

It was a scene well worth beholding; grand—imposing—terrible. Early on that same morning, Tresham had cast his eyes over the strath, and seen it beautiful in its varied garb of wood and corn, land and meadow; rich in cultivation, gladdening the heart of tenant and landlord, of master and servant, of rich and poor, with the promise of a plentiful harvest. The river, a placid silver stream, glided gently over its pebbly channel at the foot of its wooded banks, or meandered through the fields and meadows in lazy windings, until lost

in distance. That river was now a wild resistless sea, foaming from bank to brae, with the fearful ceaseless noise of raging waters ; and these fields were already in many places a wide lake, in which the corn scarcely waved its heavy head above the invading fluid.

On the Airdruthmore side, the waters, from the boldness of the banks, had encroached less on the land, but it was here that their force and fury was most strikingly visible. The stream of the Einort joined by that of the Ruth, whirled past in waves of enormous size ; and through the thunder of the waters might yet be heard the dull half-smothered crash of the rocks which ground and dashed together beneath their force. They found a group of men collected near the point where the streams united. The grieve, or overseer of Airdruthmore's farm, in deep anxiety for the fate of certain corn fields on both sides of the river, occupied the centre of this cluster, and he was surrounded by some of the tenants from the *aird* or height above.

" Eh, sirs, but this is awfu' !" exclaimed one ; " see so fast as she's coming down ; the like has na been seen I'm sure sin' the seventy-twa, when they say she gied ow'r the Cragganbui."

" Faith ! I'm thinking it 'll be worse nor that the noo," said another ; " see, there's John Mac-Robb's best oats a' drooned, an' for the hay-stack

thonder, I'm thinking we'll see it doon the water ee'noo."

"The Lord preserve us a'!" ejaculated a third, "what'll Rory Macian do?—see, if the water's no up till his byre door."

"Aye, faith, man! an' it'll be intill't and through it afore it's less; for see hoo she's rising, an' there's the rain falling in seasful.—God help us a' the nicht, it's judgment weather!" said Saunders the grieve, with much solemnity; but scarcely had he uttered the words, when running forwards to a point overlooking the stream with a face and voice of utter dismay, he roared out, "Lord sake! gin the field o' barley's no off next; see if there's no twal' rods awa' already." And good reason he had for his alarm, for the stream had for some time been beating grievously upon a bank beneath this very precious field of barley, the pride of Saunders's heart; and just as he spoke, a large piece, undermined by its action, fell into the roaring water with a terrific plunge.

"A terrible night this, Saunders," observed the laird as he joined his grieve; "we'll hear of this from the glens, I fear, if we live till to-morrow."

"By my faith, Airdruthmore, ye'll no' be long o' hearing an' seeing too, both from strath an' glen:

we'll a' hear o' it on the deafst side o' our head. See! there's thae houses o' Macian's, the water's twa fut in them this blessed meenat, and fast rising; and what'll the fouk at Ballestriach be doing the nicht? And then there's poor Munro at Ruimore. I'm fear'd he'll be biding ow'r long in that meeserable house o' his, because it may be a wee abune the water, but she's narrow there, an' she'll break out wild. An' as for the mill o' Dalroy, I wish it may na be some o' her rigging that gaed by the noo. I seed the black tarred planks casting up their sides in the red water. As for the puir fouk's corn, and your own, sir, ye may see wi' yere own een how it's faring."

"Good God!" exclaimed the laird thoroughly shocked and alarmed at this doleful prophecy of evil, which his own senses convinced him had too much appearance of probability. "I fear you are in the right, Saunders. I see the danger, and what can we do to help the poor creatures?"

"Trowth, sir, just nothing! It's the arm o' the Lord that's abroad this day, and it's no' for us to seek for to stay it. Who in *His* name could cross yon raging water? or even your own bit burn, the noo, to warn or help any man? They're a' like ourselves, in the Lord's han', an' he maun be their help an' guide through this awfu' night, for there's no help in man. And now, your honour, ye'd

best just be going hame, for neither you nor any man can do a hap'worth's good. An' it's a sore sight to see the good land an' the barley going awa'. An' ye'll get your death o' could forbye; so just mak' the best o' it, an' intil the hoose, and I'se let ye ken if onything more happens."

That nothing did remain for mortal hands to do, was abundantly obvious; but the terrific sublimity and painful interest of the scene made the gentlemen unwilling to retire. The rain, in no degree abated, continued to be driven by a fierce searching wind, and the waters were visibly rising in the strath; for dark as it was now becoming they could distinguish their dull glimmer, as they rose over the surface of one field after another, until large tracts in the strath presented the appearance of a muddy lake.

Wet to the skin, for the second time, and unable either to render assistance to those who might require it, or to distinguish any longer the progress of devastation, the gentlemen did at length retire to the house, after satisfying themselves that their slight work at the bridge was sufficient to divert the fury of the torrent from its former dangerous course. They found, in fact, that their end had been effectually gained; that the force of the increasing waters was spending itself in making inroads upon the opposite bank, and that there was

now no probability of the house or grounds being again placed in jeopardy.

Orders were issued to all the servants, to receive any person or persons who might be forced by the stress of weather to quit their own houses that night, and to make it known as widely as possible, that such assistance and accommodations as the house and offices of Airdruthmore could afford, would be free to all who might require it. And having thus taken every measure of precaution and of benevolence that circumstances admitted of, the party went home to refresh themselves, and then retired to such rest as they might be able to enjoy.

But it was a dreary and an anxious night ; the howling of the wind, and the roaring of the water, drowned all human sounds of woe or terror from the opposite side of the strath, where the principal danger lay ; and mortal eye sought in vain to penetrate the dim obscurity of the hour, deepened as it was by the gloom of the storm. Those who, impelled by a feverish uneasiness, went down from time to time to the river side, could only report that it had risen fearfully, and was still rising ; for rocks that were uncovered and visible when the gentlemen left the point, were then covered deeply ; and the alder bushes, which had grown upon the nearest bank, were all gone, together

with the bank itself, leaving in their place only a vortex of turbid water—Much—too much more, of Saunders Morrison's favourite field of barley had given way; its ripening honours had gone to feed the fishes, and its deep valuable soil to darken the muddy torrent of the Einort, while the high clean face of the scaur left the geologist free scope for examining the various substrata.

At length the dull cold morning broke slowly and heavily, as if reluctant to disclose the desolation which the night had produced. The rain still fell, though not in such terrific sheets. The wind continued to howl, and the strath, far and wide, was one expanse of grey water, with clumps or lines of wood, and here and there a little knoll rising like islands in the waste, or a group of half submerged houses, erecting their roofs above its surface. Trees of various sorts, and a quantity of wreck, was floating past; and the carcasses of several sheep and black cattle, borne along by the tumbling waves, gave a painful hint of the disastrous consequences of the flood in the upper glens.

“What news, Saunders? has any thing been heard of the poor people of the strath?” was the laird's eager salutation to his grieve, as he joined him early in the morning, at his old station, where

he was eagerly watching the diminution of his barley-field.

“ By my faith, your honour, there’s naething but a bird that cud bring news from yon side ; but there’s little need o’ it ; ye may read the news yeresel’. There’s Macian’s byre and barns doon, the last gavel fell no ten meenats syne—and I’m thinking the hoose itsel’ canna stand long ; the Lord only kens whether the puir bodies are out or in, or what’s come o’ them ; an’ ye can just see Monro’s steading, thonder by the bit clump o’ wood—there’s something no’ right there too, but I canna see what it is.”

“ Well, all that is very bad,” said the good laird, writhing with impatience at the sight of distress he could not assist ; “ but have ye heard any thing from down the way—how are they down the strath ?”

“ In faith we dinna ken muckle,” replied Saunders ; “ but here’s a *prochack** up from Drymen, that says the fouk’s just as ill off doon there. There’s seven or eight families out o’ house and home, at least ; and there’s a sough o’ some drooned too—we’ll hear, sure eneugh.”

“ But, good Lord, Saunders, man ! the poor people, may be, have not got shelter from the weather yet—send off the boy at once, man, to

* A lad.

tell them to come all up here, till something can be done for them. Stay—give him a pony—let them come with their families, and all—we can put them up in the barns, and out-houses, and lofts—there's no place down yonder where they can be taken in."

"Weel, laird, it's like yoursel' that—and the boy may gang, but maist o' them's put up already; for there's Balnagree and Clunes near hand—they'll hae gotten in there; but they're puir creators, and may be the potatoes will be scant wi' them, so if ye like we can put them up into one o' the barns here for a while, and gi' them some meal and stuff to keep life in them till better can be done. Thank God, the water's no rising any more, and the rains taking off—it's likely spent itsel' for the time."

"Why should we not go down ourselves to these poor people, sir?" said Tresham. "If the boy can get there, so can we surely, and we may be of some service—we shall see at least what can be done."

"You're right, my dear boy—you're right," said the laird, "and we'll be off at once; and in a few minutes the good old gentleman and his young friend were on their way towards their scene of distress. The distance was not above five miles, crossing the shoulder of a hill which turned the

river to the opposite side of the strath. But the traces of the storm in this short space were such as to astonish them. The roads were ploughed up into mere watercourses; deep ravines were dug into the brae faces, where rich grass or corn had before covered the ground. Trees were uprooted, fields had in some places lost half their soil carried away; others were covered with gravel, and wreck of all descriptions lay heaped upon the open spaces at the foot of the hills down which the torrents had rolled.

When they reached the height above Drymen, the devastation was still greater. The *toon*, or settlement of black huts, had for many years existed upon a green piece of gravelly land, covered with that sweet, short, velvet-like turf, which a moist climate and constant nibbling can alone produce, and which the scythe is in vain employed to imitate. The approaches of some former flood had so far alarmed the inhabitants, that they had exerted themselves to surround it with a species of dyke or rampart—by this time also overgrown with green sod—to keep off the enemy's encroachments. A burn, in ordinary times, of insignificant size, but now, like others, a furious torrent, issued from a cleft in the mountains, nearly opposite to the lower part of this toon, and entered the river below, by one of many channels it had cut through

the accumulated bed of gravel, carried down from the hills above.

Unfortunately a former channel had of old formed a hollow between the site of the village and the main land of the glen side ; and through this, at an early period of the flood, the upper overflow of the river, together with many smaller streams, began to take their course, cutting still deeper in the loose and yielding gravel ; while, on the other side, ran the full body of the river itself, which had overflowed its banks till it circumscribed the position of the village to a very narrow space.

On finding themselves thus surrounded, several of the more prudent villagers thought of flying while it was yet time, and abandoning all their property, waded through the deep but not as yet rapid stream, and drenched, and almost naked, but in safety, reached the shore. But there were others who, reluctant to abandon their whole worldly possessions, in the vain hope that the flood would subside, or at all events would not increase, stuck by their dwellings until the waters and the darkness had increased so much that it became impossible to attempt a passage across.

To these poor wretches it may be imagined how drearily and painfully the night went by ; how they watched the rising of the water as it gra-

dually overtopped the green turf rampart, entered their dwellings, and ascended until they were forced to take refuge among the smoke-blackened rafters, while the sound of walls and roofs giving way and plunging into the torrent as it tore along and deepened its channel, was a knell to warn them of their own approaching fate. Help they could not look for—their only hope was in Him who had sent this awful visitation.

When morning dawned, a part of two families were discovered clinging to the roofs of their cottages, making such signals of distress as they could; for cries and words were alike drowned by the roar of the stream, and the howl of the wind. But whence was help to come? How was it to be afforded? The fate of the dwellings which had sunk into the waters told sufficiently the necessity of speed, and there was no want of bold hearts and willing hands to attempt the rescue, had they possessed the means of doing it. But where were these means? In a glen so remote, where was a boat to be looked for, even if she could have lived in so wild a current?

“Whare’s the coble?” exclaimed a voice at length, in accents of doubt.

“The coble! and what good wud that do?” said another; “what could she do in yon roaring water?”

“Never mind that,” said one, bolder than the rest, “let us see an’ get the coble, and who kens but something may be done?”

A horse and sley was instantly got ready to bring the coble, which was a miserable nutshell of a thing kept at a house a mile off, where it was made use of for fishing with nets in a deep pool, the occasional resort of salmon. It was found driven by the waters against a gravel bank, but fortunately still retained by the chain which fastened it to its station; and was brought in triumph, and with all possible rapidity, to the place. But, alas! it was in a miserably shattered condition. A great hole in its bottom was, however, patched up with a piece of deal board, and a streak of her larboard gunwale was nailed back into its place with such rusty nails as could be extracted from the pocket of a Highland cartwright, who chanced to be among the spectators. These repairs being completed in a very clumsy and hurried manner, they were about to drag her to the side of the stream, when Airdruthmore and Tresham arrived.

The shivering groups of half-drowned creatures who had fled from their hovels, women and children, the young, the aged, and the infirm, sat huddled together under such coverings, plaids or blankets, as the goodwill of their neighbours could furnish for their service. But the attention of the

gentlemen was first and most powerfully attracted to the larger cluster of men who were employed near the water side about the coble, and who were making signals to the people on the house-tops.

“ She’ll do noo ! she’ll do noo ! ” said the clumsy, but willing operator. “ Here—tak’ a had o’ her—doon till the water wi’ her ; ”—and to the water side she was dragged accordingly.

“ But wha is’t that’s going intil her ? ” was the next question asked ; and when they compared the little black vessel with the billows of the furious red waters, even the boldest was daunted. A silence of some seconds ensued : “ Let us see, will she haud out the water ? ” at length said one among them ; and as if to cloak their backwardness, by a show of all possible alertness short of the last extremity, a dozen hands seized and swung her into the stream. The result was exactly what might have been expected : the water rushed in by a hundred crannies, and but for the chain which held her, the only hope of the poor half-drowning wretches would have been lost in their very sight.

“ She’ll no do—she’ll never do,” exclaimed one of the men ; “ and God help the puir Grants, and Augus More’s fouk—for they’re past the help o’ man.”

“ And why should you despair ?” said Tresham, who had come to the spot, and was casting an intelligent eye over the frail machine—“ a little hemp, or lint, and an old knife, will soon make all this right. Here, bear a hand, my lads, we’ll have her tight in a crack !”

“ And God bless you, young gentleman, for the word,” said an old man among them ; “ and we’re fules no’ to have thought o’ that—but who is there ’ill venture his life against that water in sic a veshall, if she were as good as ye could mak’ her ?”

“ Who ?” said Tresham ; “ I for one, and assuredly there are many of these brave Highlanders around me, that will do so too.” But even the “ brave Highlanders” around, looked down, appalled at the danger.

“ It’s muckle and no little that I wud do for Duncan Grant an’ his family,” said one stout fellow, hitching his shoulders about as he slowly enunciated the words. “ He’s a sister’s son o’ my mother’s own father, and swier’t wud I be to see them come to loss ; but och ! she’s a wild burn yon, and I ’m sure the boat ’ll never swim.”

“ As for her swimming, my friend,” said Tresham, “ if I don’t make her swim, why, don’t you go with me ; but I ’m sure a stout Highlander will never fear to do what a *sassenach* like me

would attempt—and for your own relations, too. Come, let's have the hemp, the lint, or stuff here."

A suppressed laugh, partly at the young man's expense, partly expressive of applause at Tresham's spirited interference, went round among the group; and a parcel of lint, old rags of plaids, and other condemned duds, were then soon brought forward, and, under the active superintendence of Tresham, were, by the *skians* and knives of all that could set about the business, soon forced into the gaping seams of the coble; and there could not have been a happier illustration of the value of a master spirit in overcoming the *vis inertie* of our nature, than the energy which now prevailed in the before despairing assemblage. In less than ten minutes, the coble was so far refitted by the numerous hands which applied themselves to the work, that they resolved once more to try her in the water, and found to the general satisfaction that she floated perfectly, the remaining leaks being so trifling as almost to be immaterial.

"Now, who goes with me?" said Tresham, throwing off coat and shoes, and jumping into the coble.

"For God's sake don't attempt it, Henry!" said the laird, who had anxiously watched his movements—"it's madness: there's many a one here better skilled than you in the management of this

coble—leave it to them. Don't venture, my dear boy ; I could not bear——”

“ Fear nothing, my dear sir,” whispered Tresham, “ I 'm not a bad boatman, and a good swimmer if she should go down ; and if I were to shrink from my volunteer, and to abandon the adventure, not one of these fellows would attempt it. Come, my lads, who 's the man ?”

“ Aweel, here goes then—De'il ha' me, but I 'se try for 't,” said the stout young fellow who had already spoken ; “ we 'll see what she 'll do soon. If we canna get her till the hoose, we 'll mak' for the point doon thonder.”

The laird, divided between his anxiety to help the sufferers, and his dread of evil coming over his friend, remained silent. The young Highlander got into the coble. “ Let go the rope !” said Tresham, to those who held it ; and in a moment the little vessel sheered wide into the furious torrent.

In an instant, before a stroke could be made by an oar, before they were rightly set on their seats, the current, seizing the coble, whirled her full round, then taking her broadside to, hurried her down the stream, lurching so violently, that every spectator gave her up for lost, and a cry burst from their mouths. But neither of the adventurers were ignorant of their work, and both had cool heads and stout hearts. So soon as the oars could act

they got her head to stream, and though driven far down and tossed like a mere bubble on the surface of the whirling waves, they still made way across. Watching their progress with straining eyes and inheld breath, the spectators at length beheld them gain the dead water beyond the current; but their exertions must have been desperately severe, for in a transit of not more than a hundred yards, they were driven nearly double that space down the stream; nor would they perhaps have made their point, had not the rush of the swollen burn where it joined the river caused an eddy which aided their efforts. Once in the still water, the coble shot along, and they saw it disappear behind the first dwelling on which the people were awaiting its arrival with an eagerness proportioned to their sense of the peril they were in. But Tresham had the wisdom to keep aloof, lest the frail bark should be overturned by the rush. After due precaution, he received first three children, then an old bed-ridden creature, who had been lifted from the place where she had lain for years, and who whined and cried in utter helplessness. Then followed the mother of the children, and sore did she plead to have her husband and father taken from the falling ruin; but prudence forbade what might have proved a fatal over-

load, and promising to return immediately, they pushed off amid a shout from the spectators which almost rose above the roar of the waters. They pulled up stream as far as the dead water would admit of, and crossing the current downwards with less risk, brought their freight to land only a little below the place from whence they started, amidst loud acclamations from the whole assembled party.

Scarcely waiting to take breath, in their eagerness to return ere it might be too late, Tresham and his comrade, invigorated by a dram, and emboldened by successful experience, once more started. But this time they took the precaution to tow the boat higher up the stream before casting off, and thus, although the danger was in no degree lessened, and the exertion was fully as great, they reached the dead water at the island with less loss of way. Pulling straight to the first house, they took off the two that had been left there, and then rowed to the remaining inhabited dwelling. Here they found no less than seven individuals: two children, two fine young women, an elderly pair, and a young man, their son. Of these, the two children and one of the young women, could only be received in addition to their freight, so that a third trip became unavoidable. But expe-

rience had now proved the efficacy of the means employed, and the pain of temporary delay was lessened to all parties.

The straining of the crazy vessel in the fierce current, however, occasioned a further trial of patience. Distressing as the loss of time must be, a fresh caulking became unavoidable. While this was in progress, more than one of the young men around, ashamed of their suspicious backwardness, now desired permission to take Tresham's place, which he, sufficiently breathed, and satisfied that no ill could attend the change, readily consented to. In due time the coble happily returned, bearing to shore the whole remaining people, safe but greatly alarmed; for during the boat's unavoidable absence, one of the gavels had fallen outwards, and the roof was so much shattered, that it could not have stood many minutes longer. In fact, scarcely had the boat reached the shore, when the whole fabric fell, leaving the tops of the walls covered with rubbish, alone above the water.

"O God be thanked, God be thanked!" exclaimed one of the women, as she witnessed the catastrophe.

"Aye, weel may ye say sae, Leezie, woman," replied one of the by-standers, "but if it hadna been for this young gentleman, under Providence, ye wud scarcely hae been here to say the word."

“O may the Lord bless him! an’ surely the blessing o’ ould and young ’ll be upon him day and nicht,” exclaimed the poor woman, lifting up her hands with a passionate gesture, as she sat upon the ground, with her dripping half-naked children clustering round her. But in the midst of mutual thanks and congratulations, the young man, Ronald, who came in the last boat, started up with a hurried ejaculation, and said,

“Aye, mother, thank the Lord for our lives, it’s weel our parts to do so the day, but it’s little else we hae to boast o’—we’re ruined fouk this blessed minat—but ’odd! I’ll hae one wrestle for them yet, any how. O, lads, who of ye ’ill tak’ the boat wi’ me once more the day?”

“Tak’ the boat again? Ou the lads daft—what for wud we tak’ the boat now the fouk’s a’ out on dry land?”

“O man, ye dinna ken; everything we’re worth in the world ’s gone—clean gone—meal and meat, house and home, graith and plenishing—a’s gone and lost—but we might have saved some of the stock; and there’s the twa bit horses, and the three coos a’ in the byre still alive, and I forgot them, puir baists, in the last hurry when the gavel fell. O if I had but letten them run, they might hae shifted for themselves; I’m sure they wud too—half the nicht was I putting down straw under

their feet to hize them out o' the water; an' to lose them after a'! I'll tak' the boat, if I maun row her mysel'. O Robbie, man! ye're a strong sonsie chiel'—wunna ye gie me a han'?"

"Hoot man, Ronald, are ye daft? have na ye saved dear life, and wud ye throw it awa' after so wild a venture?"

"Aweel lad, I'm the less obliged. O Hamish, ye hae worked weel the day, it's to yeresel' and this good gentleman, that we all owe our lives. O man, can I see the ould man, an' a' the bairns, an' the lasses starving, an' wunna ye gie me a lift to help them a', and save the baists that wud keep life in them? I'm sure I wud do as muckle for you, man."

"Na, na, Ronald; I ventured life for your feither and your family; but I've a feither and fouk too, and I'm no' so mad as gie my life for any baist that ever eat grass."

"Then God help me!" said the young man in bitter grief. He cast a despairing look at the ruined steading and roaring water that surrounded it, and wrung his hands. "Weel then, I'll try it mysel'," said he, pulling his bonnet over his brows with a fierce determination; "better lose life than see them starve,"—and he stepped towards the boat.

"Stop, stop," said Tresham, moved by his de-

spair. "The water is no worse than it was—I'll row the coble with you, Ronald, and we'll see what can be done—though I fear—"

"God bless you, sir," said the young man, "ye're a true friend; O we'll do noo, please the Lord;"—and, in spite of all remonstrances, they towed the boat up the stream to gain upon the current.

"Shame on ye all," exclaimed an old man from amongst them, in Gaelic, "and are ye going to let the *sassenach duniuasel* take every turn himsel', while ye all keep your feet dry? 'Od I'll take an oar mysel' first."

"De'il hae me then if ye do then," said Hamish, piqued into an effort; "Ronald, lad, I'm for ye, after a'; come, sir, ye've wrought sair eneugh, as ould August says—let me go for you."

"No, no," said Tresham, "I'm determined to go, but I dare say we'll be none the worse of you also, this trip—so come in and shove off."

Away went the adventurers, and better practised than at first, though the danger was the same, they crossed the stream and soon reached the ruined steading. On rowing to the door-way, they found it already burst open by the falling roof. A beam lay resting, as it seemed, upon the body of one of the cows, and the carcass of another was already floating with the head down; but the

head of the third was still above the water, and the loud bellow which she gave as the door was torn away to give them admittance, sufficiently proclaimed that she was still alive. "*Crumach dhu, proneach!* an' is that you, puir baist?" said Ronald, jumping out of the coble, which hung on by the door-way, while he entered to relieve his favourite. "I wud ken ye're rout among a hunder'; whisht proneach, whisht lass, we'll soon hae ye out o' that; but ochone! hoo are ye ever to cross thon wild water!"

The sad survivor of the three cows was with difficulty extricated by the efforts of Ronald and Hamish, and was dragged out of the byre by the halter round her head, while she maintained her station by swimming. To relieve the horses was a matter of less difficulty; for the rubbish and straw placed under them during the night, had, in fact, raised them above drowning depth; and the ruined gavel had opened a way by which they were readily turned out to shift for themselves. With ready instinct they made at once for the shore. "O," said Ronald, "if poor Crumach Dhu could only get a little help, she might get safe to land yet."

"Tie the halter to the coble," said Tresham; "we'll try if she'll tow over."

"I'm feared the coble wunna steer wi' her,"

said Hamish, "but any way we'll try;" and having fixed her halter to the broad clumsy stern, away they pulled.

While the boat continued in the dead water, the cow, with a docility which proved her sense of danger, swam after, and nearly as fast as the coble pulled, so as scarcely to impede its course. But when the stream took both the cow and the boat in flank, the former became terrified and restive, and pulled against the latter, so as to embarrass the efforts of the rowers. It was with difficulty they reached mid channel, having lost much way; when a sudden jerk of the animal's head almost overset the coble, and she shipped a great deal of water. "Cut the tow, cut the tow, and let the coo drift, or we're lost!" cried Hamish, and Ronald sprung up to undo the knot. But the struggling of the beast, and his own irregular movement precipitated the catastrophe he sought to prevent, for a violent jerk tore out a plank from the stern, and pitched Ronald right overboard, while at the same moment the coble filled and upset, and Tresham and Hamish were also left floundering in the stream.

Prepared from the first for some such contingency, the fortitude and presence of mind of Tresham, did not desert him. He instantly struck out, and made towards the shore, but was hurried

with terrible rapidity almost to the mouth of the burn below. At that point, however, he was fortunately caught by an eddy which whirled him swiftly back towards the beach, and dashed him against the stump of a tree which had stuck on a gravel bank, thrown up by the meeting streams, and to which he instinctively clung.

The spectators on shore were horror-struck at the occurrence of a misfortune which they witnessed without being able, in the smallest degree, to aid the sufferers. It was remarked that the person of Ronald never appeared after he pitched into the water. One man, indeed, thought he saw his head emerging just where the two streams met ; but if such was the case, he was soon hurried away, and rose no more. Hamish stuck by the coble, which still floated, and was swept by the same eddy which had laid hold of Tresham, yet nearer the shore, from whence the aid of his friends, provided with ropes, and dashing in to his assistance, was enabled to reach him. The cry then rose, "Save the Sassenach gentleman ! save the brave Sassenach !" and every one ran to the beach near which he still clung to the tree, although sorely buffeted by the water. What was to be done ? no one could tell, and none dared tempt the depth of the boiling space that intervened between the shallow and the shore. A

short tumultuous consultation was held, the result of which was, that eight or ten of the stoutest men should advance into the water some space above the point in question, "shoulder to shoulder," after the Highland fashion; and when they had reached as great a depth as they could maintain their footing at, they were to launch a log of wood, fastened to a long rope, made of all the cattle halters within reach, which it was hoped might float within his grasp. The expedient was immediately put in practice. The first launch of the log failed, for it swam in-shore without reaching the young man. But a second attempt was more successful; for the log itself fell athwart the stump, and Tresham did not hesitate a moment to abandon his more precarious support, for the safety-buoy thus sent him by his friends. He clung to the log, and in the course of a few more seconds was triumphantly dragged to the beach amid the loud shouts of the surrounding people.

But to the praises and blessings of those whose admiration, or whose gratitude he had excited, or to the lamentations of the sufferers, and all the horrors of the scene, Tresham was now insensible; for, when upon reaching the shore, he attempted to rise and thank those who had saved him, his head grew dizzy, and he sunk back upon the spot. By the orders of the anxious laird he was

borne into a hut, not far off, where all their efforts and their skill were exerted to restore animation. It is questionable how far these might have been successful, had it not chanced that a medical gentleman who sometimes visited the glen, had been storm-staid on the preceding night in the neighbourhood, and at this time arrived to view the devastation at Drymen. By his directions, Tresham was divested of his wet clothes, his body was wrapped in warm blankets; stimulants of such sorts as were procurable were duly applied, and when circulation had fairly returned to the system, its too dangerous rapidity was checked by a moderate bleeding. In two hours the young Englishman was enabled to return to his more comfortable quarters at Airdruthmore; and such of the sufferers as could not be accommodated at Balnagree, and the other neighbouring villages, were sent to the laird's offices, while he promised to furnish for all, a portion of meal and potatoes from his own stores, until more effectual arrangements could be made for their permanent comfort.

Melancholy, indeed, were the cogitations of the two gentlemen as they measured back their steps to the house; for if what they themselves had seen was so painful and terrible, what must have been the full aggregate of human misery endured during the last twenty-four hours. How many

casualties like that at Drymen might there not have occurred ; what might not be the loss of life to deplore ? what *must* have been that of property ? how many must have that night seen themselves reduced from comfort and independence, to absolute destitution ! These were reflections which weighed heavily upon the mind, and they were not the only ones which occupied the thoughts of Tresham. Th esingular prediction and emphatic warning of old Elsie, to himself, with its no less striking fulfilment, came over him with startling force ; nor need it be doubted that the still more interesting and momentous hint thrown out by the old nurse to his companion, had its full share in his cogitations. That the same reflections had occurred to Isabelle, was obvious to him, from her sudden start and quick appealing glance, so hastily withdrawn, when her father described his young friend's exertions, and his danger in the tumultuous waters. He felt like one who lives under the influence of a spell. A thrilling and mysterious sensation of doubt and joy pervaded his soul, and combined probably with the lassitude of over-exertion, to produce a depression of spirits which not all the commendations of Airdruthmore, nor the silent, though assiduous kindness of his fair daughter, could entirely remove.

In the meantime the rain had at length ceased

to fall, and by noon of that same day, the retiring mists, the breaking clouds, and the glimpses of blue sky seen through them, overhead, declared that the storm had ceased. The water-mark upon bank and rock indicated no less certainly that the flood was at length subsiding; and after issuing directions to all his people, suited to the exigency of the time, the good laird and the anxious inmates of Airdruthmore retired to the comfort of a quiet meal and a little repose after their labours.

CHAPTER VII.

DISINTERESTED FRIENDSHIP.

“ ’Tis a vile act,” says conscience ; “ It will prove,”
Replied the bolder man, “ an act of love. ”

THOSE only who have witnessed such a calamity can conceive a just idea of the spectacle which the lovely valley of Strath-Einort exhibited on the following day, as the waters, slowly and sullenly returning to their widened channels, permitted the eye to range over the wide track of their inundation. A melancholy and bewildering sight it was, in truth : extensive fields of yellow corn or green pastures torn up, disfigured, and overlaid with quantities of sand and gravel ; huge chasms, hollowed out, from whence this diluvian wreck had been torn : great *scaurs* on the hill faces, and the borders of every stream, the edges of which yawned all gashed and raw like a fresh wound : trees and bushes torn up, and half overwhelmed, reared,

their shattered roots and branches above the gravelly soil, or stood with their naked torrent-rolled trunks, memorials of the fearful visitation. A mingled wreck of herbage, grass, and branches, and tangled roots, thrown high upon the remaining trees, marked the extraordinary height which the water had attained to; and sheaves of corn, and half green ears, betokened the melancholy demolition of the farmer's hopes.*

There were other and still more ominous evidences of destruction. Tottering walls, with broken beams and rafters, rearing themselves among a heap of rubbish, denoted where but two days before the comfortable farm steading had existed, or where a group of cottages had for many years afforded shelter to the labourers of the place. Where might their former inmates now be? — the carcases of cows and horses scattered

* Should the sketch contained in the preceding chapter, and the commencement of this one, be thought by any to be overcharged, the author begs to refer his readers to the excellent and impressive account of the great Moray floods in 1829, given by Sir Thomas Lauder Dick, a work not less remarkable for its great interest, than for its accuracy and research. The dreadful visitation it records on a scale of such surpassing magnitude, is nevertheless one, which in a minor degree is of frequent occurrence in the glens and straths of the Highlands; and the above description was written with no peculiar reference to the events recorded by Sir Thomas.

about, hinted a melancholy reply to the painful question. That many had escaped, was however certain, and hope at least remained that the number of actual victims might be less than appearances threatened. But the river was still by far too much swollen to admit of being crossed, so that no direct intelligence could be obtained even from those places within actual view. Great pools and tracts of water yet standing on the flats and in every hollow, prevented communication even between neighbours on the same side of the stream, and still partially covered the face of the strath.

Nevertheless, hour after hour failed not to add to their intelligence, and tidings of one fresh disaster trod fast upon the heels of another; and though the actual loss of human life was found to be smaller than might have been dreaded from the alarming circumstances of the visitation, that of property, in stock and crop, threatened to be exceedingly great. But it was not until the lapse of some days had familiarized their eyes to the changed aspect of the country, and brought in more correct reports from a distance, that Airdruthmore could form even a very doubtful estimate of the loss which his property had sustained. When he did, the aggregate was most alarming. Pastures and fields destroyed; and many acres of the best carse land washed clean away or over-

whelmed with stones and rubbish; a quantity of wood swept off; the crops of many of his farmers ruined; their steadings and buildings utterly demolished, and their cattle, horses, and sheep, drowned or carried away: and to provide against a recurrence of such another calamity, whole miles of embankments were required.

The amount of these losses, and the probable expense of the necessary and prospective repairs, was not to be calculated by hundreds, but by thousands of pounds; and, alas! in spite of all the plenty and hospitality which reigned in his dwelling, even hundreds were hard enough to be come at by the honest laird of Airdruthmore. Painful and melancholy as were the immediate and obvious consequences of this flood, they were not the only or most important effects which it threatened to occasion; but of these we shall have to speak in the sequel.

The reluctance which we feel at forcing unpleasant subjects upon the reader's attention, has in some degree occasioned us to lose sight of certain individuals, who, whatever may be his or her opinion of their merits, did unhappily, through the indolence and easy temper of the laird of Airdruthmore, contrive to acquire a very powerful influence over his family. We allude to that worthy writer to the signet, Thomas Macaskill,

Esquire, and his nephew, the laird of Ballytully, to whom, however, it is our intention forthwith to do such justice as we can.

We can venture to affirm, that this respectable pair had by no means lost sight of what they held their proper interests, nor in the smallest degree relaxed the grasp with which they enclosed, as they hoped, their purposed victims—they only, like a spider, which watches the unconscious flutterings of a destined fly, lay by in their dens awaiting for the fit moment to dart on their prey.

The laird of Ballytully had been long detained by business of an urgent nature—for he too had his business, as the reader may hereafter discover—detained, we say, both from home and from Airdruthmore, for a much longer period, doubtless, than he anticipated when he quitted that country in August. The doctrine of antipathies might by some have been pressed into the service, in accounting for this prolonged absence; for nothing could have been more obvious to an unconcerned spectator than the dislike which he entertained to Henry Tresham almost from the earliest period of his acquaintance with that gentleman: a dislike which assuredly was in no wise diminished by the attention paid by the young Englishman to Isabelle Stewart, nor the complacency with which, as it appeared to the jealous laird, these attentions were

received by that young lady. Yet little as the self-sufficient Ballytully might have been disposed to place himself in competition with a person whom, however humiliating the admission, he felt to be his superior, he would not assuredly, under less imperative circumstances, have left the field open to so dangerous an adversary; he would rather have hovered about to harass the enemy whom he dreaded to face in open field.

But though forced by necessity to quit the ground, he neither despaired nor abandoned the contest. Determined to return so soon as a fitting occasion should arrive, he left behind him spies, who watched every movement of his antagonist, and reported every event that took place. Means still more unworthy would not have been neglected had they been placed within his reach; but the habits of the laird of Airdruthmore were too upright, and he was too well surrounded with honest and faithful retainers, to be accessible to misrepresentations regarding the character of his English guest; and Henry thus escaped the breath of unmerited slander.

The reader has already been admitted into the confidence of this amiable uncle and nephew, so far as concerns their plot upon the daughter of Airdruthmore, the heiress of ten thousand pounds certain, and, failing one precarious life, of the

property itself. And it was a striking feature of their intrigue, that they had contrived so far to implicate the honest laird himself in their designs against his daughter, as to perplex his mind with doubts regarding the conduct he should pursue towards her. For, while he absolutely disclaimed all idea of urging her to act contrary to her inclination, he felt bound, as it were, by some mysterious influence, to aid his old friend, in the accomplishment of a plan so obviously the wish of his heart.

As time passed on, the good laird's perplexity increased exceedingly. The favourable opinion which he had entertained of Ballytully during the earlier years of their intercourse, whether from the careless security and incautious conduct of that gentleman, or from his own more accurate, because more interested observation, had by no means increased of late, particularly since the period of his daughter's arrival to take up her abode at Airdruthmore; nor could he fail of being struck with the wide discrepancy between the character of that daughter, and that of her purposed husband—with her immeasurable superiority over him. He felt that to yield her to such a person would be throwing her away. Something about "placing pearls before swine" suggested itself to his recollection, and his heart smote him

for even entertaining the idea of such a sacrifice. Yet such was the mental thralldom exerted over him by his friend Tom Macaskill, that he could not screw his energies to the effort of disappointing or offending him; he therefore had recourse to his customary expedient of driving the ungrateful subject from his thoughts. He pursued a similar course with regard to his daughter. Instead of at once confiding or gradually breaking to her a negociation so nearly concerning her happiness,—from reluctance at first to enter on a subject which implied the possibility of her leaving the home to which she had so lately returned,—and, subsequently, from an intuitive conviction that the intelligence would be displeasing to her, he delayed from day to day, and from month to month, to touch upon it; and thus did time pass on, leaving the young lady in happy ignorance of a destiny from which she would have undoubtedly revolted.

Such undecided conduct had the common fate of all half measures—or rather *no* measures—it increased the evil which it proposed to cure. Isabelle, ignorant of Ballytully's character, and totally unsuspecting of the footing on which he conceived himself to be regarding herself, seeing in him only a friend and favourite of her father's, suppressed those expressions of coldness or disgust

with which she might have repelled the advances of a disagreeable stranger, received him with fitting welcome at her father's table, and treated him with becoming courtesy; so that he, supposing her informed on all that concerned their projected union, not unnaturally mistook the forbearance and politeness which she observed towards him, for a tacit acknowledgment of his claims, and an acceptance, so far as consistent with maidenly modesty, of his proffered advances.

It was on such terms Ballytully conceived himself to be, when Tresham made his first appearance in the country. He only waited, in concert with his uncle, till the fulness of time and opportunity should enable him to make his proposals in form, when he was so disagreeably alarmed by observing the mutual good understanding, which in his apprehension had arisen between this foreign interloper and his intended bride.

It is probable that the more sagacious writer had penetrated with greater accuracy into the sentiments and motives of his client. But so far was he from relaxing in the smallest in pursuit of his object, that he resolved the more firmly to spare neither pains nor time in seeking its attainment; and with this view he looked eagerly around for the means of weaving additional bonds around his vic-

tims, so that escape from his power should be impossible.

The increasing debt and not decreasing expenses of the laird, were the most efficient engines he possessed for effecting this object ; and he directed the whole scope of his crooked policy and mischievous skill to augmenting the power of their operation. Large as the balance against the laird in the books of the W. S. had become under his ingenious and multiplying pen, and sadly as he had growled for a long time, and reluctant as he affected to be, and perhaps truly was, to permit of any increase, his scruples appeared now to have ceased ; credit was renewed, and bills drawn by his client were honoured with a readiness which delighted no less than it surprised that honest gentleman. But he asked no questions, satisfied to experience so grateful a relaxation of the shackles which his friend and agent had for a long time drawn so tightly.

“ O that Martinmas would kill Whitsunday, and be hanged for the murder ! ” is a pithy and pious aspiration fathered upon some unhappy laird who was tormented at these ominous periods of the year with long bills and sharp duns ; a prayer we will take upon us to answer for having been echoed by many a one, laird and loon, lawyer and

client, at such junctures, since the day of its first promulgation. But between these emphatic periods, there are intervals when such as are not absolutely "hard up," enjoy a temporary relaxation from these "notes of woe," and when tradesmen and labourers are ready enough to supply men of reputed property with their goods and their work, upon the hope of prospective payment. It was during such an interval of ease, such a lull between the squalls, that the laird of Airdruthmore presuming somewhat largely on the liberality of his "doer," had launched out into considerable expenses of various sorts, and was proceeding to complete several desirable improvements on his property, when all his attention, his means, and his operatives, were summoned to work cut out for them by the disastrous flood we have just described.

When Mr. Thomas Macaskill received from his friend and client the letter in which he announced the event, described his losses, and the infallible defalcation in rents which must ensue, and intimated the absolute necessity for providing funds for the needful repairs, the agent sprung upright from his seat. "Whoo! by the Lord, that's prime!" said he; "the best news I've had this twalmonth—this is a clincher with a vengeance—this fastens the hook—saul an' body! but we have

him noo, let him flounder as he will ;” and with this charitable and friendly conclusion did the worthy man of law sit down and dispatch a letter to his no less estimable nephew, instructing him with the facts that had come to his knowledge, and recommending him to hold himself in readiness to act as occasion might require, or as he should direct.

To the laird of Airdruthmore his communication was in a very different strain. Expressions of the kindest condolence were mingled with assurances of unaltered friendship and promises of efficient aid ; but the prospective alliance which should one day unite their interests as it would connect their families, was artfully alluded to, as an obvious incentive to superior exertion ; and a delicate hint was let fall expressive of impatience to witness the completion of this desirable union.

The laird started as if a hornet had stung him, when this unwelcome allusion met his eye ; for the pain which it gave him exceeded by far the satisfaction which he felt at the assurances of friendship and assistance contained in the agent’s letter. It pressed upon a sore place, it wrung the galled withers ; for his reluctance to what he could not conceal from himself, would be a sacrifice of his daughter to an unworthy object, and from an unworthy weakness on his own part, was daily in-

creasing. Perhaps the remarkable contrast which existed between his English guest and his proposed son-in-law had its share of opening his eyes to the deficiencies of the latter, and increasing his reluctance to a measure which he had long ceased to view with the smallest satisfaction, if indeed he had ever done so. But intolerance of pain was a peculiarity of the good laird's constitution which we have more than once had occasion to notice. To entertain distress or perplexity of mind for one moment longer than they were forced upon him by passing events, was a folly he never dreamt of. The elasticity of his spirits was truly astonishing ; for the moment the pressure was removed, up they mounted, his customary cheerfulness returned, and care and vexation " like dew-drops from the lion's mane, were shook to air."

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Haste thee, nymph. and bring with thee,
Mirth and youthful jollity.

TRESHAM, in the meantime notwithstanding the hints of the waning season, lingered in the Highlands reckless of the spell that bound him, unaware perhaps how intimately his frequent protracted stay at Airdruthmore was connected with the state of his heart ; for protracted absence, that test of true passion, had not yet probed the wound, nor discovered to him the depth of his attachment to the fair Isabelle. The laird, we have said, had conceived a mighty fondness for his young English guest, and spared neither entreaty nor persuasion, even to the full measure of old Highland importunity, to induce him to prolong his stay ; and time after time had Tresham yielded to this grateful pressure so easily, as sometimes almost to blush

at his own facility. Discretion at length prevailed over inclination. To intrude too long even on the most liberal hospitality might be possible and would be unpardonable. Besides, his conscience had for some time past been pricking him for neglect of his friend Glenvallich, whom he had neither seen nor heard of for a considerable while.

To Inverallich, therefore, he at length returned ; and had he been very solicitous to search and know the state of his heart, the sad blank which he felt there, in spite of all the warmth of friendship, the refinements of society, and the luxurious comfort of his friend's delightful abode, might have convinced him of the truth. So remarkable was the alteration of his manner and his spirits, that Glenvallich did not fail of remarking it and rallying him upon the change, in terms which came too near the truth to be agreeable.

From this time forward the time of Tresham was divided between Inverallich and Airdruthmore, at each of which places he was equally welcome ; but had the days and weeks spent at each been noted respectively, the balance would have been found greatly in favour of the latter. In such pleasant alternations, the sharp exhilarating frosts and dry wholesome winds of October had gone by, and given place to the dark skies, the shortened days, and chill damp fogs of the gloomy

month which succeeds it; but even the cold and wetness of a November day failed to drive the now acclimated Englishman from his sport on the hills of Airdruthmore:—where else did he find the grouse so numerous and so fine?—where could he be so sure of a blackcock at need, as in the young fir plantations on the Mealmore? It is true, that amusements and pursuits of a more domestic nature were not altogether neglected by the inmates of Airdruthmore, and Isabelle might not unfrequently be seen, accompanied by her pleasant guest, on her way to visit the various cottagers, and pensioners, and other objects of interest in the vicinity of the place. It was a pleasure which they still enjoyed uninterruptedly, if not unseen; for those who watched their steps were as yet unprepared to offer them any molestation.

It was on their return from one of these delightful excursions, and after dinner had been removed, that Tresham summoned resolution to announce his intended departure on the morrow, after a tolerably long protracted sojourn at Airdruthmore. His communication was received with an exclamation of surprise and vexation from the laird, who followed it up with a strong remonstrance, ended with a warm solicitation to prolong his visit yet a while. “I shall quarrel with Glenvallich out-

right," said he, "if he monopolizes you in this way, Harry. Why, I don't believe you have been a week with us out of the whole last month."

"Three weeks, I assure you, my dear sir; and Glenvallich makes the same complaint. It is very delightful to find our friends desirous rather to retain than to get quit of us; but, to secure this lasting, it is as well not to presume too much."

"Nonsense, nonsense, man; stay where you are. Learn to know when you are well—come now, stay till Monday." But Tresham was resolute; he had reasons for being so, which forbade his yielding to a temptation which was daily becoming more irresistible, and continued to excuse himself upon grounds of propriety, when Miss Stewart interfered in behalf of her father's petition.

"I am not fond of pressing, Mr. Tresham," said she, blushing slightly; "but upon this occasion, you must excuse me for taking part with my father, and entreating you for once to alter this absolute purpose of yours in our favour. Pray do give us the pleasure of your company for four or five days longer; after which," continued she, smiling, "I shall leave the matter in your own hands. I have a particular reason for the favour I now solicit," added she with heightening colour, "so pray, Mr. Tresham, do not refuse me."

“ If I did, Miss Stewart,” replied he, with a degree of animation which did not tend to remove the flush from her cheeks, “ I should have more self-denial than I fear I have yet shown. You know not the strength of the temptation, nor the weakness of the tempted. I yield as we all do, when the choice is between duty and pleasure. Mr. Stewart, you are not aware, I fear, how strong an attraction Airdruthmore, and all it contains, possesses for me, or you would think it full time to get quit of so *biding* a guest.”

“ Wait till we tell you so, lad,” replied the laird; “ and if you stay among us till we do, I am of opinion you will grow one of ourselves.”

“ Ah ! what should I like better, my dear sir?” said Tresham, with more of feeling and impulse than perhaps might be prudent. “ Nothing would delight me more—but—”

“ Well, well ; but me no buts just now. You have yielded to my daughter, not to me ; *but* we won’t quarrel about it, and that’s enough.”

“ I acknowledge the obligation,” replied Miss Stewart ; “ and although upon many occasions courtesy as well as virtue is its own sufficient reward, I may venture to promise Mr. Tresham that he will not repent his urbanity on this occasion.”

“ That I am very sure I shall not,” replied

Tresham, with a strong emphasis and a speaking smile, and the conversation dropped for the time.

“I observe you are *boun* for slaughter to-day, Mr. Tresham,” remarked Isabelle, at breakfast, on the fourth morning after the conversation we have just recorded; “but I must beg of you not to take too distant a range. Come back soon, for I promise you metal more attractive than black cock or muirfowl—eyes brighter than the wild gazelle, and steps more graceful than the bounding roe; so beware of your heart. I expect company of a very dangerous character here this same day.”

“Bless me! that’s alarming, indeed, Miss Stewart; but forewarned is forearmed they say. Pray let me understand the nature of my danger, and I may yet escape.”

“Why, I look for the arrival to dinner this very day, of a young lady, a friend of mine; and if your nature be at all susceptible, beware!—for she is a very lovely person.”

“Ah, a young lady!—and lovely too!—*à la bonne heure*!—let her approach—I fear her not. ‘I wear a charmed heart,’ and defy the face or the strains of the mermaid herself.”

“Boast not, lest your bonds be made strong,” replied Isabelle, smiling; “but we shall see the end on’t. Stay not, however, too late at your

work of death, or I shall suspect your courage. Our larder is well-stocked already by your activity; so return and see this dangerous fair by daylight, and hand her from her carriage if you dare."

There was a shade of tenderness, almost of gentle upbraiding in the smile which the young Englishman threw back in reply to this challenge, which might have been interpreted, "Is it you of all women, that deem it needful to warn me to guard my heart against a stranger?" and as he took his way to the scene of his sports, his mind teeming with thick-coming fancies, he could not avoid being sensible that in speculating on the charms of the promised beauty, and in revolving on those of other fair ones with whom he had flirted with impunity, they were all brought to the test of one standard of perfection in his heart, and that standard was Isabelle Stewart.

Such, however, is the inconsistency of man, that curiosity at least was roused, and that he actually did return from his sport at an early hour to make his toilet for the evening. Nor did that toilet appear to be less careful than usual, if we may judge from the address of Miss Stewart, who, herself blooming with more than ordinary loveliness, entered the drawing-room. "Ah! quite right, I see," said she; "I observe, soldier like,

you are prepared for service, and armed for conquest."

"Why, Miss Stewart," replied he, "according to your ideas, it is I who run the danger. I shall do well surely if I come off scot-free; as for conquests, Heaven knows they run not in my head—incognitas have no charms for me."

"Well, we shall see; at all events you owe me, as they say in this country, 'a day in harvest,' for my timely warning. But hush—hark!—she comes!—muster your spirits and advance with me; you must do duty for my father, who, it seems, is out of the way:" and in fact the sound of wheels was just then heard, and a carriage rolled fast up to the entrance.

As the door was opened, Isabelle hurried forward, and Tresham, stepping to the carriage, handed from it a young lady wrapped in a fur travelling cloak, who threw herself into the arms of her friend. "My dear Maria!"—"My dearest Isabelle!" Tresham started—"Maria!—and that voice!" said he; "Good heavens! can it be?"

"Yes, Mr. Tresham, it can be, and it is," replied Isabelle; "behold your fair enemy—let us see if you have courage to face her."

"God bless me—Maria!" said Tresham, embracing his sister; "what enchanter is it that has

brought you here?—how came you to Airdruthmore?”

“Nay, Harry, I think I may reply with the very same question,—what enchanter or enchantress has brought *you* to Airdruthmore?—how came *you* here?—against your will we may presume, if not without your knowledge; otherwise, I take it, your mother and sister would have been instructed of the fact.”

“Ah, how is my dear mother?” said Tresham, who anticipated with some uneasiness the storm of playful raillery which he saw his sister was preparing for him, and which he would gladly have escaped at the moment; “it is long since I have heard of her.”

“Aye, Harry, and much distress it seems to have cost you, if we may judge by the frequency of your epistolary inquiries. Why the good lady is as well as a mother can be, who has been kept in a most painful state of anxiety regarding a darling and thoughtless son, who, for all she can tell, might have been disposed of in a witch’s caldron, or fairy’s hill; or carried off to the castle of some enchanter; or spell-bound by some fair syren, in these wild remote Highlands, of which the good lady knows as little as of Kamp-schatka. Eh, Isabelle! has she not cause for her fears, think you?”

“Come, come, Maria,” said Isabelle, blushing a little at the malicious pointedness of her friend’s appeal, “this is not fair. If this is the reward I am to have for my good-natured co-operation in your choice scheme of surprise—of revenge I rather now think it must have been meant for—if I am to come in for my share of ‘the skaith and the scorn,’ as if I had been accessory to your brother’s felonious concealments, I shall positively desert you.”

“And go over to the enemy, no doubt,” interrupted the lively lady, with a glance of peculiar meaning at her brother.

“Do so by all means, Miss Stewart,” said Tresham; “much need have I of a friend, it appears, with two to one against me, as I now learn has been the case; and as for Maria, her tongue is as merciless as indefatigable in an encounter of this sort.”

“Fortunately for you, Hal, it is frozen at present; so do let me get to that charming fire, and help me off with all these shawls and furs,—there’s a good soul:—not that you are to get off so easily for all your misdemeanors, brother of mine; you shall give an account of yourself by and bye, that I promise you.”

Confounded not less by the sudden and unlooked for arrival of a sister, whom he imagined to

be quietly stationary with his mother in England, than by her keen and unexpected attack, Tresham was not sorry for even a temporary truce, that he might devise some satisfactory excuse for the silence he had hitherto maintained towards his family on the subject of Airdruthmore and its inmates. The truth was, that immediately after becoming so unexpectedly an inmate of Airdruthmore, he had, in writing to his mother, mentioned his hospitable reception in the house of a Mr. Stewart, without particularizing him by title or locality. Accidental circumstances had prevented his writing again in detail, so that his English friends, aware only of his remaining in the vicinity of Inverallich, continued to address his letters to that place. As the interest he took in the scenes and society of Airdruthmore assumed a more tender and peculiar character, he insensibly shrunk from all approach to a subject so near his heart, and with the sensitive caution of a lover, sought rather to decoy others from the haunt of his secret treasure, by confining himself to the mention of places and events at a distance from it.

It was not more a consciousness of this involuntary disingenuousness, than an increasing sense of the cause, which brought the blood into Tresham's cheek, as he attempted to account for his extraordinary silence, upon the plea of unwillingness to

alarm his mother by informing her either of his accident or its consequences ; at all events, until sufficiently recovered to return to Inverallich. Even the bitter irony of his lively sister, as she interrupted him impatiently, was a relief to the confusion which he felt while blundering through this weak apology.

“ Ah, brother Hal ! this will never do—a most *lame* excuse, indeed—your *understanding*, at least, is in a most weak condition still.—Don’t trust to it, friend, for it won’t serve you to hobble out of the scrape.—Isabelle, my dear, can’t you help your poor knight with a better story, or must we be content to take it all, *au pied de la lettre*, without further question. A suspicious or fanciful person might indeed imagine there was something more in the affair. Here we have a wandering champion agape for adventure, who finds a garden and a goddess in a wilderness, by whom he is received with all the courteous alacrity of the good old times of chivalry ; but, instead of breaking out into extatics on her beauty and his own good luck, and making them the theme of voluminous epistles to his tender mother and his sister dear, he coolly hushes up the whole affair, and keeps a most religious silence on every particular, satisfying his conscience, if not the anxiety of his friends, by insisting that a sprain in the foot hindered him from using his

fingers. It was well that the inability did not extend to your's, my dear Isabelle—by sympathy, you know—otherwise your disconsolate sister might have still sighed in ignorance of the fate of her unnatural brother.—But come, my dear, let us leave him for the present—in charity let me go change my dress, and recover the shock my poor nerves have sustained.”

“ Little fear of your nerves, Maria, while your tongue goes so well ; I see you are the same mad-cap as ever—but Miss Stewart knows you, and can make allowances.”

“ O ! never fear ; we understand each other, Mr. Tresham. I am right glad, my dear, to see that your spirits have stood this rough journey so well. I hope a good dinner will restore your charity, for you have been sadly severe, I must say.—Come, let me show you the way, you might lose yourself in this labyrinth of Highland enchantments.”

During the cheerful meal which followed this unexpected rencontre, Miss Stewart's tactics in conducting her little manoeuvre became again the subject of conversation ; and every inmate of the house of Airdruthmore was delighted to find that their new and lively guest was to continue with them for a considerable time.

“ You don't know all your sister's good-nature, Mr. Tresham,” said Miss Stewart. “ What think

you of her having taken pity on a forlorn damsel, and actually consented to face the dreariness of a Highland Christmas, and the horrors of a Highland winter, for her sake. The days of chivalrous enterprize and romantic devotion are not over, you see, although the champion must sometimes be sought for among the weaker sex."

"Ah! but my brother quite bears away the belle from me in that respect," said Maria, laughing. "I, you know, had some slight notion of the *carte du pays*—some idea of the nature of the adventure I had undertaken; whereas, Harry was absolutely ignorant on the subject—he rushed upon it hoodwinked—all unprepared."

"And so have doubled the enjoyment, Maria. I have gained the knowledge of a very interesting and romantic country, not to speak of a kindness and cordial hospitality we should look for in vain in more southern latitudes and favoured climates."

"Ah!—yes—no doubt. It is not, I dare say, in every parish of merry England that a stray traveller can look for a Highland welcome, nor a disabled sportsman for such disinterested attention," replied his sister, still perseveringly bent on rallying her unfortunate brother; and who probably, with the sharpness of female wit, suspected, if she did not already see, how the case was. "A village inn might be a safe and welcome refuge for an ordinary

wayfarer, and a country surgeon might do well enough to set a broken bone; but doubtless it is only among such grand romantic scenes as we find in the ‘land of brown heath and shaggy wood,’ that a true lover of enterprise would seek adventures, or choose to sprain an ancle. It is there only, and in such primitive spots, that you find the true touch of hospitality—the delicate attentions—the—the—all the *petits soins*, in short, and delightful *agréments* which, no doubt, have contributed to your very lingering recovery at Airdruthmore. Is not that the very thing you would say, brother Hal?”

“In faith, my sweet young lady,” interposed the good laird, a little bewildered with her railery, ‘one would almost suppose to hear you, that neither kindness nor common charity was to be met with on the other side the Tweed, when ye make so much of a mere ordinary act of duty; for nothing did we do for your brother that we would not have done for the poorest body travelling the road. Surely the bit and sup, and a bed to lie in, are what no Christian soul would refuse to a traveller, far less to one in distress; and you would not, I hope, have us worse than our neighbours—whatever is more than that, was less our act than your brother’s own. We found him, on acquaintance, a gentleman in the best sense of the word, an

amiable, pleasant inmate; and assuredly the obligation was our's when he consented to favour us with so much of his time, as he has kindly done. People of this stamp, my dear Miss Tresham, are rare among us, and it is our interest to keep them as long as we can. The longer he makes this house his home, the better pleased will its owners be; and now that we have got you to back our suit, and give him a motive besides his own kindness, to prolong his stay, we'll hope to keep him yet, and shew him how merry a Highland Christmas may be."

"My brother, sir, would need to have a colder heart than nature has given him, if he were proof against the kindness he has met with in this house," said the young lady, driven from her strain of playful sarcasm by the old gentleman's benevolent earnestness. "I neither wonder at the time he has spent here, nor the reluctance he feels to quit so pleasant a home. Nay, I fear that the disease of *adhesiveness* may infect others of the family, and that my dear Isabelle may rather have cause in future to weary *of* me than *for* me. As yet I know nothing of Airdruthmore but its inmates; if its external charms bear any comparison with its internal attractions, as I have heard is the case, I expect nothing short of fascination."

"And fascinated you will be, I promise you,

Maria," said her brother, "if you retain a spark of that love of the picturesque and beautiful which made you rave for years of Derbyshire, and live for ever in that little wooded dell behind aunt Grantham's house. You will not be cheated here with little stony ridges and green mounds, doing duty for hills and mountains; nor will you be invited here to lose yourself in a wilderness of ten acres. The dark-brown hills around us, and the blue mountains beyond them, are the genuine Highlands, the dwelling-place of the deer and the roe, and the heath-fowl and the ptarmigan—the resort of bold hunters and solitary shepherds—the scenes where Ossian's heroes have trod and fought and flourished—the haunts of his dim viewless ghosts, the place of leaping streams, of grey stones, and crags that lift their rugged heads to the clouds;—the very sight of them will make you poetical. As for me, though no poet, the thought of ranging with free foot among them sets me half wild; my blood bounds more swiftly through my veins, as I press the heather. I could fancy myself one of the chiefs of old, free, generous, and brave, with no law but my own will, and no duty but to make my clansmen happy."

"I think, my dear Harry, that you are a great deal more than *half* wild, as you call it, already;

your blood seems to course quite fast enough, Heaven knows; and as for mine, the very thought of climbing up one of these monstrous mountains puts me into a fever, and I should think would rather take away your breath than inspire you with the chieftain-like ideas you talk of.—But don't look so very indignant, you'll find me quite as enthusiastic a goose as yourself, if perhaps not just so much of a Hercules, and though I do like sometimes to throw a little cold water on your high-flown fancies, as you well know."

"Yes, Maria, I do know you, and your capricious perversity of old; I wonder only how, with all your eccentricities, you managed to secure the esteem of so valuable a friend as our fair hostess there."

"Thank you, Harry!—but the wonder becomes lessened, when we see that her charity and benevolence can be extended even to others of the family. It was full time, at all events, that I should make my appearance, and claim my rights—but I shall try to keep my own now."

"And you well deserve to do so, my dear Maria; we have still to see whether your brother's friendship will outlive the chill of a Highland winter—you, on the contrary, have given that proof of yours by coming among us at such a season. I only wish you could have seen us first at a happier

time of year, and before that terrible flood destroyed so much that was delightful.”

“Flood!—what flood do you speak of?” asked Miss Tresham.

“Why, my dear Maria, if you had been with us then, you would have seen what this wild country is, in storm and tempest, with a witness. But we shall have time enough to speak of that visitation and its consequences, upon the scene of its ravages. You would have seen your brother, too, in a light that would have gratified you. I assure you he is quite the hero of the glen, from his exertions on that occasion. But thereby hangs a tale, which we shall reserve for some future occasion. In the mean time, you have told us nothing of your journey, my dear.—How did you make your way through the “mountains vast and deserts idle,” which compass in this Highland paradise of ours, as Mr. Tresham insists on calling it—tell us sincerely what do you think of our ‘approaches?’”

“Why, to say the truth, they are a little formidable,—we have mountains wild enough, in some parts of England, and those we pass through after entering Scotland are bleak and barren to one’s heart’s content—but they are all a joke, in vastness and sublimity to those we travelled through after passing Perth; and certainly some of the scenery surpassed all my preconceived notions of

grandeur and beauty, so much as to make me ashamed of the meanness of my conceptive powers.”

“ But as you approached us, the tracts of brown and barren hills must have given you a melancholy impression of our Highland wastes.”

“ O no ! I assure you—I liked these boundless expanses of shaggy heath, and vast mountains, and grey stones, and black bog, peat-moss, I think you call it, extremely. I’m a little like Harry, there, in that—I like room to expatiate in—they fill the mind with mournful but sublime ideas. They suggest immeasurable desolation—utter solitude—nature in primæval simplicity—the world before the creation of man—chaos itself. How impressive a lesson of humility is taught the mind in these dreary trackless wastes ! where the eye aches for some cheerful object to rest on :—one cannot avoid comparing oneself with the waste objects around. I saw a single man toiling up among the grey crags on one of the mountain-sides—he looked like an atom losing itself in the wreck around ; and some sheep, dotted on the face of another hill, were like grains of white dust, hardly perceptible. Then the silence—the awful silence ; only interrupted by the roar of a wild stream, or the bark of a shepherd’s dog, swallowed up, as it were, in the circumambient vacuity. I caught myself shuddering at the infinite loneliness

of the scenery, so utterly new to me. But, I beg pardon, Harry will say I am getting poetical—in other words, tedious.”

“Nay, only making good my words, my dear Maria—nature asserting her triumph over art—an old story—the enthusiasm I spoke of, bursting forth at the first opening; give it way, my dear, or it will force it; there is too much exciting food here to leave you a hope of controlling it.”

“Ah! the season is so terribly against all enjoyment, just now,” said Miss Stewart. “You have arrived, Maria, at the saddest moment of the year. Our woods, like the dying dolphin, are bright in their last and loveliest tints; but their beauty is mournful, for it is the precursor of temporary death. Yet winter, when once fairly set in, has its charms too.”

“Aye, that it has,” replied Miss Tresham; “what is more splendid than the sunrise of a bright frosty morning, when the whole country sparkles with frozen dew-drops, and every harsh feature of the landscape is softened into harmony by a rich pearly haze?”

“I am delighted to hear you say so, my dear,” said Miss Stewart, “for I anticipate much enjoyment together. To me, my favourite glen is perfectly beautiful in winter. Nay, I sometimes doubt whether I do not prefer its quiet and sober

garb at that season, to the gayer hues of summer. It is then so calm, so peaceful ! When the wind is howling down the strath, and the snow clouds drifting over my head, I am sure to find stillness and shelter there ; and the ferns, and the hollies, and other evergreens, which the warmth of the place encourages, suggest recollections of summer which contrast makes more precious. Even when the ground is covered with snow, the beauty of the place is only changed, not effaced—the richly fleeced trees and shrubs, and the icicles dangling from the rocks, might, to a lively imagination, represent the palace of one of those chilling spirits, that they say reside in the frozen regions of the north.”

“ Aye, well, young ladies, this is all very fine, no doubt ; but to my mind ye’ve left out the best part of the story—what think ye of returning from these fanciful romantic escampades, with wet feet and chilled fingers, to a good matter-of-fact, rousing fire, making yourselves all comfortable in your own snug rooms, and meeting round a well-covered table ? Then the apples and the nuts, and the drop of hot toddy, and the cosy crack round the fire, every one telling how he found the day and how he passed it. Then the cheerful cup of tea, and the music, and the round table in the drawing-room, and the curtains closed in. Who

cares then how the wind blows, or the snow falls, or whether it falls or no? These are the comforts of winter, my dear young people, and faith, to an old man like me, they're almost worth the whole year together."

"Upon my word, sir, you do yourself injustice," said Tresham. "I quite agree with you as to the delight of these winter comforts; but I must say that I know few better qualified to enjoy the pleasures of the gayer seasons—or who *does* enjoy them more; for all that assumed humility, you would not like to have another say so much in disparagement of your vigour, sir."

"Ah, it's all very well to talk of my vigour, my boy, but truth is truth; I'm not what I have been—though I think I could figure away with this young lady in a reel or strathspey, yet—we'll show you braw doings at Christmas, Miss Tresham,—and you, Harry, ye only know the Highlands yet in summer, man,—ye shall see whether we know how to cheer a winter's day and night."

"God knows, my dear sir, happy should I be to stay to witness it. I would accept your hospitality as frankly as it is given. But you know I am not my own master, sir. My leave has been once renewed, and if my regiment is ordered out, I must go with it—besides, my friend Glenvallich will expect a share of my time."

“A fiddlestick for Glenvallich—and as for your regiment, de’il a fear of its being called upon at this time; your interest is as good as your claim is just, for a long holiday. As for Glenvallich, he has had a long enough spell of you, and we’ll have him here—we’ll have him here, my boy. What, man! we’ll be gayer here, than him at his castle, for the life of him—we’ll have him here, man. We have the attractions—we have the magnets all to ourselves—he cannot choose but follow.”

“Well, sir, depend upon it, my will is in the matter; but in the meantime, spite of magnets and allurements, I must transgress the laws of attraction, and return to Inverallich, for its lord expects me; but my engagement will soon be over, and perhaps I may contrive, in return, to bring him within lure—indeed, I know he did project a visit, and talked of coming to carry me off himself.”

“Let him come if he dare,” said the laird, “he may find he has caught a Tartar—egad we’ll keep him too.”

Accordingly, at the request of his friend, Glenvallich did repair to Airdruthmore, and the enjoyment of the party assembled there was complete, for they were mutually pleased with one another, and congenial in their tastes and dispositions. But no earthly pleasure is permanent—circumstances

required the return of Glenvallich, and Tresham accompanied him to Inverallich, leaving the lades of Airdruthmore to their own resources. From this period, however, Tresham, instead of making any further preparations for quitting the Highlands, thought only of arranging his plans and exerting his interest for procuring such extension of his leave as should enable him to pass the winter among his northern friends. The unexpected arrival of his sister at the very spot where his whole desires were centered, gave a colour of propriety to the prolongation of his stay, which gratified his secret passion ; and soothing his conscience with this flattering unction, he departed for Inverallich, fully resolved to return with all convenient speed to the less splendid but dearer mansion of his worthy friend in Strath Einort.

CHAPTER IX.

ATTEMPTS AT REFORM.

Sad reformation ! sad reformation !

OLD SONG.

BUT events were at this very time in progress, which, foreign as they might have been held to the personages of our little drama, occasioned in the sequel consequences as important as unexpected to the family at Airdruthmore.

In the course of the foregoing pages, we have more than once had occasion to allude to the practice of illicit distillation which prevailed so much throughout the Highlands. At the period of which we treat, this illegal and most objectionable traffic had increased in a more than ordinary degree in the districts which form the principal scene of our story. The negligence of the excise officers, whether the effect of collusion or fear, had

emboldened the illicit traders to such a degree, that in defiance of decency, and, one might have said, of prudence, they set the government and its officers at defiance, and scarcely even affecting concealment, carried on their operations to an extent and with a publicity scarcely credible.

The whole range of mountainous country embraced by or connected with the district in question, was made the theatre of these operations; but their principal haunt continued to be Glen Shlichard. It was the stronghold, the fortress of the smugglers; their retreat when pursued; the depot and magazine of their stores, and of their produce and property. It was there that their chiefs convened to concert the requisite arrangements and regulate the employments or enterprises of the confederacy; and every concern of the sort in the neighbourhood had more or less correspondence with this central point.

The impunity which for a long time attended the excesses of these illegal traders, had exactly the effects that were to be expected, upon the character of the people and of the place. Vagabonds and even criminals of the worst descriptions, outlawed and broken men, tempted by the prospect of safety and of gain, flocked to Glen Shlichard, and imparted to the rude but inoffensive inhabit-

ants of its mountains, a tone of dark and reckless villany which did not originally belong to them.

To break the laws of their country, and defraud the revenue, was not always the limit of their evil doings. Crimes of a graver and darker character were laid to their charge ; and the more peaceable part of the community began to tremble at the tales which were told of the wild smugglers of Glen Shlichard. In fact, the traffic was carried on to an extent in this district, which brought those who pursued it, of necessity, into contact with men who drove a similar trade upon the high seas ; for a Dutch cutter, a Guernsey lugger, or a Manks fishing-boat, were often found useful auxiliaries in furnishing materials or taking off the manufactured article ; and thus was a hopeful connexion established, by which the perpetration of any enterprize, however criminal or atrocious, might be aided, and a retreat from consequences secured.

With the proprietors and substantial farmers of the country it was neither the wish nor the interest of these lawless men to quarrel ; while the former perhaps felt that forbearance, in regard to them, was the most politic, if not the most praiseworthy line of conduct to pursue.

In truth, it is notorious that in former and not very distant times, the crime of smuggling

was by no means held in that abhorrence which strict morality would have required ; and the convenience, in countries remote from the ordinary sources of supply, of obtaining an article of comfort or necessity at a moderate cost, was a temptation scarcely to be resisted. Thus, tea, brandy, rum, and other foreign wines and spirits were supplied by the smuggler on the easiest terms—often in barter for articles of little value in the regular market ; while on the other hand, the illicit distiller became a ready merchant for the corn, particularly the barley grown, on the arable farms of Highland as well as Lowland proprietors.

A due sense of these conveniences produced upon the part of the worthy persons we have alluded to, a leniency of feeling, and a tacit forbearance, if not a positive connivance with the free-traders, and in general both parties preserved a fair understanding towards each other ; a species of league, implied if not proclaimed, which was seldom violated on either side. It was only when long and unchecked success had rendered them presumptuous, and when a gradual habituation to criminal excesses had deteriorated their character, and stamped them with the graver and darker characters of vice, that prudence was gradually lost sight of, and they hesitated not to insult and defy the very persons by whose culpable tolerance

they had so long continued their nefarious courses with impunity. So great had their boldness and insolence become, at the period in question, that in spite of repeated warnings, they carried on their operations almost in the face of the day and of men, and carried grain to the still, or whiskey from it, in all directions through public or private paths, with scarcely the decency of concealment. Neither bolt nor bar, gate nor inclosure, would arrest their course, when, with their cavalcade of Highland shelties, they were conveying their malt or their produce across the country. The laird's park, the farmer's field, or the minister's garden, were alike made the thoroughfare for the occasion; and a crow-bar, or a heavy stone, was always at hand to wrench or burst open the strongest locks. Woe to the rash wight who should attempt to arrest these wild riders of the night as they swept through his field, and trod down his corn or his grass; a severe pummelling was sure to be his slightest punishment. As for the revenue officers, thinly scattered over a wide surface as they were, how were they to stem the current?—we have already hinted at the way in which *they* managed matters. Occasionally, indeed, an attempt might be made to arrest some notorious offender, and in such cases violent collisions did not unfrequently take place, generally terminating in the defeat and

discomfiture of the officers of government. To apprehend a culprit was a matter of infinite difficulty—to obtain evidence against him almost impossible—for the horror which Highlanders entertain against giving evidence or information against a criminal, whatever be the nature of his alleged crime, is almost insurmountable; and to attack a Glen Shlichard man, they well knew would be but to irritate in vain a nest of angry hornets. The mischief was known and acknowledged, but the remedy was less obvious, and therefore nothing was attempted.

An evil so disgraceful and so glaring, so ruinous to the morals and best interests of the country, could scarcely long escape the attention of so acute and judicious an observer as our friend the laird of Glenvallich. With the regret of a high-toned and well-regulated mind, unfettered by local prejudices and untainted by considerations of expediency or convenience, he perceived the demoralizing influence of such practices, and resolved to exert all his influence in checking, and finally putting an end to them. But he speedily discovered that the task he had undertaken was not less than Herculean: that the hydra with which he had to contend possessed at least as many heads as the Lernean monster, and would be to the full as tenacious of life. It was in vain

that formal notices were served over the whole of his extensive property, declaring that illicit distillation would neither be connived at nor tolerated, and that every one engaged in it should be given up to the full pains and penalties of the law. The tenants and cotters smiled at the empty threat, as they deemed it to be; promised amendment—renounced the still and all its works—and went home to prepare for a more vigorous campaign and more active employment than ever.

Few were the woody dells or remote glens in which an active officer might not have detected palpable evidences of *operations*—they were even to be discovered in the open muirs around. And well did the forester and gamekeepers in Glenvallich's employment know this to be the case; but notwithstanding the repeated charges of vigilance they received from their master, and the caution to pass no smuggler unnoticed, they could not and did not believe that the laird had seriously made up his mind to so hopeless an enterprise as attacking this Highland monster in his very den.

But this was not a state of things to last. Glenvallich was not so easily to be deceived in a matter he had so seriously at heart. He speedily became aware that his orders were neglected by his servants, and his threats disregarded by his

tenants. With the former his process was short. "Do your duty, or quit my service," were the alternatives. But with the latter the case was by far less simple. Fresh manifestoes were issued, and seconded by the laird's personal warnings and remonstrances, but all was ineffectual. The more respectable among them listened to him respectfully, and some of them did, ostensibly at least, withdraw from the obnoxious traffic. But it was not until several harsh and decided measures had been carried into effect against convicted offenders, that the more remote hill tenants—men born and bred up in the habits and practice of the country—obstinate old Highlanders, with many of the valuable qualities, but not without some of the evil propensities of their race, would credit or could comprehend that the laird had indeed so resolutely set his face against one of their most customary, most highly valued, and most important economical resources—or, as they conceived it, privileges—that which alone enabled them to pay their rents, to afford themselves a few extra conveniences, and a drop of comfort for themselves and their friends upon the occasional festivity of a marriage, or a burial.

In process of time, however, their tardy apprehensions were quickened, and their eyes fully opened to the coming blow, by the arrival of summonses

to quit, which were served against one or two incorrigible offenders, upon the ground of contumacy. This was bringing matters to the point, and Glenvallich having gone so far, resolved to give a striking example by completing the measure he had adopted. But to carry it into full effect by ejecting the culprits, proved equally difficult and distressing. On the black muir, where stood their blacker huts, surrounded by some patches of wretched oats that even in the mellow month of September reared themselves above the brown expanse in hopeless, unfading greenness—where a few hapshakled, half-starved shelties, stole a meagre and uncertain bite from the surrounding heather, and the long-bearded tribe of *capricorn* alone appeared to flourish ;—there, on this bleak spot, had their fathers dwelt for generations—perhaps for ages ; and there did their unambitious children hope to vegetate like the grey heath amongst which they lived, till gathered by the hand of the universal reaper to the green hillock at Kilrannock where their fathers lay at rest. To judge by the indignant reluctance with which they abandoned these hopes, a stranger might have imagined their birth-place to have vied in beauty with the fabled loveliness of Arcadian valleys—in fertility with the fat plains of Goshen ; but he knows little of human

nature, and still less of *Highland* nature, who would measure the strength of *amor patriæ* by fertility of soil or benignity of climate. The very reverse of such a scale is notoriously the case, for the love of country is more frequently than otherwise found to be in an inverse ratio to the quantum of comfort or of the means of subsistence to be enjoyed in any given place; and when we hear of the Highlander bestowing his pity upon the inhabitants of a country which cannot boast of rein-deer—of the Arab in his burning desert, reconciled to the want of the riches of Europe, when he hears that no dates grow there—or of the sooty, thick-lipped African, compassionately regarding the *offensive ugliness* of a high-featured, pale-faced European,—we may cease to wonder that the Scottish Highlander should cling to his black hut and peat smoke, and his midden at the door, to his bread of black oats, and potatoes with a sip of milk to season them, and his long dreary winters, shut out from all community with the world, with little employment beyond saving his beasts from perishing in the snow, and no light through the weary evenings except his peats, and now and then a chip of flaming bog-pine.

Such was the nature of the attachment with which Glenvallich had to contend, when their obstinate adherence to malpractices reduced him,

as he conceived, to the necessity of dispossessing certain of his mountain tenants from their homes. As long as they could, they opposed a dogged, inert resistance, to the myrmidons of the law who were sent to eject them from their miserable tenements; but when at length the threat was held out of applying fire to the inflammable materials of their dwellings, they then sullenly gave way; slowly they loaded on their sledge-carts the wretched articles of furniture and clothing they possessed, and driving before them the few sheep, and goats, and cattle which belonged to them, took their course to the next place of shelter within their reach. The women and children followed them, wringing and clapping their hands wildly, and with loud lamentations bitterly upbraiding "his father's son who could think of putting those out of house and home who had been on the land afore his own fouk—aye, almost from the days o' the great Macgilliecullach himself." Even the neighbours, though not involved in the present ruin, beheld this infraction of their long respected rights with uneasy anticipations, and stood gazing on the transaction with gloomy and almost threatening looks.

Perhaps had Glenvallich been aware of the intense sensation which the measure he had resorted to was likely to create over the bulk of his pro-

perty, or rather had he witnessed the misery it would occasion, his resolution might have given way, for it might have occurred to him that rooted habits are not apt to yield to the first impulse of external force, nor were those who had been reared in one set of opinions, however intrinsically wrong, to be convinced at the first word by a new chain of reasoning or a fresh moral code, however cogent the one or beautiful the other—still less were they likely to feel the justice of a punishment awarded for an act which they did not acknowledge as in any degree criminal.

But Glenvallich was by no means aware of the moral blindness of his tenantry in its full extent, and did not, consequently, reason in this way. He only felt the importance of his object, formed his system, and thought of how to carry it into effect. But the cry of the country could not long fail of reaching his ears. Such of his neighbours as deemed themselves authorized to interfere, represented to him the hopelessness of opposing successfully, unsupported by judicious fiscal regulations, or by an efficient executive force, a system, the growth of years and inveterate habit, and nursed by an erroneous policy into universal practice. They remonstrated with him on the odium he was sure to incur, the slight comparative advantage to be gained, and urged sundry motives of a less laudable nature, for desisting from

the line of proceeding he had adopted. These remonstrances were echoed by his most respectable tenants and most faithful servants, who described the distress and alarm occasioned by the violent measures that had been pursued, and the deep regret felt throughout the whole property, that "the son of his father" should have caused it.

Glenvallich, though unconvinced, suffered himself at length to be persuaded. He acknowledged that the time was not yet ripe for so complete a change as he had contemplated, and resolved to reserve himself for a maturer state of things. He could not consent formally to annul or recall his commands, founded as they were upon incontrovertible principles of justice; but in consideration of the ignorance and prejudice with which he had unfortunately to contend, he permitted a relaxation of the vigilance which had been employed to enforce them. Notorious offenders were still reprimanded, threatened, or punished, according to circumstances and expediency; but those who had the decency to keep retired from view, were no further molested than as the officers of the revenue chose to interfere. Glenvallich continued to be known as the determined opponent of illicit distillation, in all its shapes; but the odium which had been excited by his first harsh measures, gave way to the esteem and good-will elicited by his active huma-

nity, his strict justice, his affability and open liberality, from every tenant and dependant upon his property.

In this state of compromise did matters remain for some years. About the period of which we speak, however, the increase of the illicit trade, and the audacity and profligacy of those concerned in it, had again aroused Glenvallich's indignation. A longer residence in the country had made his worth better known, and established his popularity and influence upon the sure basis of esteem. This influence he now once more felt called upon to exert for the purpose of checking the progress of demoralization and crime; and again did he loudly raise his voice to anathematize the prevailing illegal practices, and threaten with the landlord's displeasure, as well as with the vengeance of the constituted authorities, all those who should be found engaged in them.

But the manner in which this interference and warning was received, proved more clearly than any thing else the striking moral change which the people of the country had undergone. Symptoms of ill-will among the lesser and remoter tenantry became speedily apparent. Trespasses and encroachments of a character approaching somewhat to defiance, were committed by some of those who had smarted at length under the often-menaced

lash ;—murmurs and obscure threats were uttered against the laird for his unpopular conduct, and were more boldly intimated in several anonymous letters addressed to the factor of the property or to some of the inmates of the castle.

As for the smugglers themselves, they appeared disposed to carry matters with a high hand. Although, in order to avoid ill-timed interruption, they confined their operations to retired and concealed places, they used neither ceremony nor decency in openly transporting the produce of their labours. Not content with making use of the private roads and paths of the estate, they would, in sheer malice, as it might seem, make their way in the most conspicuous manner through the very heart of the mains* of Inverallich ; trains of loaded horses were led through the pleasure-grounds and shrubberies, obviously from motives of spite, by parties of men so numerous that it was unsafe to oppose, whilst it was useless to remonstrate with them. These parties were conducted by leaders, who appeared to exercise an authority, and to maintain a degree of discipline among them sufficient for the purposes of resistance and defence : but who these leaders might be, no one ventured

* The grounds more particularly connected with, and surrounding the mansion-house, are in Scotland termed the " mains."

to say ; nor, though their haunts were shrewdly suspected, did any one care to confess an accurate knowledge of their localities.

So serious did this growing evil appear, that Glenvallich conceived himself bound, as a leading man of his county, to omit no possible means of uniting the community with the government authorities, for the purpose of suppressing it. With this view, he addressed himself both to the neighbouring proprietors and to the official representatives of government, recommending them to concert measures for remedying the alarming evil which had grown up amongst them. With the former he had but very limited success—they were the slaves of prejudice, perhaps of self-interest; and there were but few individuals, and those of an age and habits assimilating most with his own, who could be prevailed upon to promise their aid. With the government authorities he was more successful ; for, applying at the fountain-head, his communications were well received, the inquiries he suggested were ordered to be made, and the measures he recommended in so far were listened to, that directions were transmitted to the local authorities to report upon their fitness for adoption, and to listen to and assist the laird of Glenvallich in such points as might appear calculated to promote the service of his majesty.

While things were in this situation, a circumstance occurred which completed the growing indignation of Glenvallich against the smugglers, and probably occasioned the more active and decided measures which he at length adopted against them.

More than one of his tenants, originally thriving and industrious people, and who, till this time, had contrived in one way or other regularly to pay their rent, had, in consequence of their connexion with the illicit trade, become dissipated and abandoned, and were forced to throw up their farms. But there was one young man, the son of Glenvallich's nurse, who, though not his foster-brother, was considered as nearly in the same affectionate light, whose fate affected that gentleman more powerfully than that of all the rest.

After receiving a good plain education, the young man had been placed for some years under charge of the factor, who instructed him in the method of keeping accounts, and afterwards employed him in visiting different quarters of the estate, bringing the lesser tenants to a settlement, and collecting the smaller rents. In these affairs he had conducted himself so well, and had displayed so much zeal and acuteness, that Glenvallich had entrusted him with a superior charge, which involved the necessity of his residence at a remote

farm. Unfortunately, this residence was in the vicinity of Glen Shlichard, and while honestly exerting himself to promote the interests of his patron, and the views of that gentleman relative to the destruction of the smuggling trade, he came in contact with the smugglers themselves. The leaders of that fraternity comprehending at once the importance of attaching to their interests a person so high in favour with his master, omitted no means of making the lad's acquaintance, and by degrees seducing him from his duty.

In this nefarious attempt they succeeded but too well. The young man, once initiated into their unhallowed revels, became rapidly dissipated and idle, neglected his master's business, and was constantly absent from the posts and charges entrusted to him. The mere enjoyment of the liquor soon led him to take an interest in its manufacture, and he was prevailed upon to attend and see the process of an operation. The next step was to advance a trifling sum, and take a small share in the profits of a brewst.—Who so convenient a person as the factor's clerk to assist in procuring a supply of the corn they required?—and young Mackintosh was not only able, but soon became willing, so to assist them. It is true, that the means with which he did so were not always his own, but he proposed to replace them honestly out

of the expected profits of the still, and in the mean time trusted to the success of another piece of fraud for concealing the apparent defalcation.

The alarm was first taken from the young man's unaccountable absences. His enemies—for, like every favourite, he had enemies—watched his steps, and traced him to his vicious haunts. Whispers to his disadvantage soon reached his patron's ears: an inquiry was set on foot, which terminated in partial detection. He was severely reprimanded, and withdrawn from the dangerous post to be once more placed under the factor's eye, who was directed to keep a vigilant look-out over his conduct. But remonstrance and caution came too late; the poison had already taken fatal effect. After a protracted series of neglected duties, of commands evaded, and of counsels despised, the young man put an end to the struggle by finally disappearing, to join, no one doubted, the new companions he had selected. The truth was soon discovered: a last affectionate and earnest appeal on the part of his patron was met by contemptuous defiance on the part of the renegade, and all hopes of repentance or amendment were from thenceforth abandoned as visionary. But the mortifying incident stuck deep in the mind of Glenvallich, and, as we have said above, most probably determined him to direct more serious and active measures against the authors of such extensive mischief.

CHAPTER X.

AN ALARM.

What ruffians have we here?

The weird wife sicht—her wedded hands
She heavit in the air,
“Sin’ Heaven will have it sae, in vain
Were succour, rede, or prayer.”

THE party at Airdruthmore, in the mean time, pursued their customary occupations or amusements, often enlivened by the society of Tresham, who saw fit to lay more than usual stress upon his fraternal duties, but who, nevertheless, was occasionally absent upon various excursions, and particularly with his friend Glenvallich. One day in the beginning of December, lovely notwithstanding the season, the two young ladies set out to stroll up the glen; while Tresham, who was

with them, taking a brace of spaniels, left them to look for a hare or a woodcock in the copsewood around it, promising to join them at the "Black-rock-pool."

"What say you, Maria?" said her friend, as they bent their steps towards the birch-wood. "What say you to a visit to your brother's friend, the sybil, my old nurse Elsie? It will not take us much out of our way, if such loiterers as we can be said to have a way, and the old woman will be delighted with the attention?"

"With all my heart," replied Miss Tresham; "I shall be delighted to go. Indeed, I rather think I ought to take it highly amiss that you have not introduced me to your sybil ere now; at all events, it is evident *I* am not a personage of such consequence as *some* folk, whose coming was not only foretold, but who was honoured by a flood got up for his peculiar delectation. I take it very ill that no opportunity is given me for signaling myself, I assure you; but still I may take "a peep through the plaidy," were it only to see whether no carriage-and-four, with a young lord "all in green and gold," as the nursery-maids have it, "is coming straight to marry me."

"Beware, Maria!—scorn not the plaidy, lest you feel its power. Scoff not at the seer, till you know your weird, which you may soon do if you

go with me. I'll warrant my old nurse will have something to tell about you."

"Well, I dare her the worst; and so now for the adventure."

We have remarked, that the day was delightful, an air unusually balmy had tempered the heavy dew of the season, which a colder atmosphere would have converted into hoar frost; and Elsie was found enjoying the brief sunshine in her customary seat. Light as were the footsteps which displaced the dew-drops, the quick ear of the old woman caught the sound; and no sooner did the ladies catch a glance of her figure, than they could see that she was preparing herself to receive her visitors.

"May the blessing of the Almighty rest upon my darling, though her that prays the prayer be a poor unworthy object!" said Elsie, as they approached; "and may God bless the bonnie face that's wi' you, for they say she's as good as she's bonnie, and that 'll bring a blessing o' itsel' on her, and a' about her."

"Aye, my dear moome, and so you found us out?" said Isabelle, casting a significant glance at her friend. It is not easy to cheat your ears, as I well know; but come now—how did ye know it was a lady that came with me, after all?"

“ Ochone ! when did ever man’s foot, gentle or simple, tread sae lightly as yon bonnie wee foot ?” replied the old woman ; “ but truth to tell, I heard the sough o’ her saft quick voice, or ever ye cam ow’r the know, by the three muckle ould birch-trees yonder—the wind flees far in thae calm mornings.”

“ Well, Elsie, I dare say I need not tell you who she is—that it is your friend Mr. Tresham’s sister. I dare say you know all about her. Perhaps you have seen her, as you did her brother, before his arrival in the glen ?”

“ Och ! many is the stranger and wilder sight than that I see, my child ! the sorer my burthen,” replied the old woman with a heavy sigh ; “ and may ye never ken the sorrow o’ the sights and the heaviness of the knowledge with which it has been His will to afflict me—but that was na needed, maithal, to tell me who’s fornent me e’en now ; for weel may ye think there’s little goes on about the house where ye are, that I dinna hear o’. But if the night didna shew who the morn was to bring, it didna’ want trouble o’ its own.”

“ Elsie, I grieve to hear you say so. You were not ill, I hope ?”

“ Ou no, darling, not in body any how ; but the mind’s troubles are often the worst to bear.”

“ And what was it then, moome, dear ?—no evil

sights, I hope. We must not frighten my friend here with evil omens—with corpse-lights, or burials, you know.”

“ My dear child, what the Lord sends, that ye most bear. But no, it was nothing o’ that kind—only a bad dream, and about yoursel’, maithal.”

“ A bad dream, and about me, Elsie ?”

“ Aye, and about the young lady that’s wi’ you.”

“ What say you to that, Maria ? You were affronted some minutes ago, that you had been overlooked by Elsie. Perhaps you may now be like the boy in the tale, that said a spell and raised a genii—afraid to face the spirit you have cooked ?”

“ No, no,” said Maria, laughing ; “ I fear neither spirits nor prophecies. Pray tell me all about it, Elsie.”

“ Aye, laugh, darling ; it’s the light heart that laughs, and may yours never be so heavy that ye canna laugh—but my dream winna harm you ; and I canna weel say what it was after all ; for ye was in it, my child, and she was in it, and there were wild-like men in it ; but I dinna think it was you or her they were after—it was rather mysel’ ; for there was some—O weel did I ken them, for muckle ill did they to me. But they’re dead and gone ! and one—O surely *he’s* gone till his place. The Lord keep us a’ in our right mind !—mine is sair

confused sometimes !” and the old woman looked so harassed and distressed, that even the light and buoyant spirit of Miss Tresham was sobered, and she assisted her friend in soothing the poor creature’s mind, and turning her attention to more cheerful subjects. Miss Stewart expressed her fears that the remote and solitary situation of her dwelling contributed to her depression of spirits, and urged her to quit it for a more pleasant and lively abode.

“ You are too far away from us, my dear moome, in this lonesome place, so late in the year ; I wish we could get you near us, we should find some means or other of driving these gloomy visions away from you ; I wish you would consent to this, Elsie ?”

“ And is it you, my own dear child, that believe we can change the Lord’s will by changing house or home ? or think you that ould Elsie is a bairn to be frightened wi’ a lone glen, an’ a November night ? What it’s His will to send till His creatures, be it good or evil, it’s surely no’ their part to shun, but to bear it wi’ humble patience. No, no ; so long as your worthy father, and your father’s daughter will leave these ould bones where they are, they’ll never cumber another bit by my will.”

“ And indeed, my dear moome, it’s neither the

one nor the other that would in any way molest you; but you are a sad way off from help in the bad weather and the long nights, and you are not so strong as you have been: if you were to be taken ill at night, it would be very distressing."

"My child, He that feedeth the young ravens, and clothes the grass of the field, will take care of the ould cretur whom it has been his will to preserve so long. But whisht!--what's yon?" said Elsie, suddenly assuming an attitude of attention; "there's feet coming this way, and no kened feet either. They hae a wild tread wi' them; I wish they may be just cannie. Would ye, darling, step into the house here, till we'll ken who they are? it's clean and dry, and may be the like o' you is best out o' their way." But Miss Stewart had no alarms; on the contrary, thinking her presence might be a protection to the old woman against folly or wantonness, she chose to keep her ground.

She had scarcely signified this resolution, and was standing with her friend in expectation of the strangers making their appearance, when the sound of footsteps and human voices struck even their less acute ears; and in no long space, three strange and rough-looking men, dressed as it seemed in the Highland garb, made their appearance, talking in loud vulgar tones, and descending among the copsewood behind the cottage. So suspicious was

the aspect of these persons, that the courage of Miss Stewart failed her for the moment: she began to think that they might possibly be as likely to call forth rudeness or insult as to check it, in such persons, and catching her friend by the arm, she retreated out of sight, until, at least, they should ascertain what the business of the intruders might be.

The foremost was a short, stout, broad-built fellow, whose brandy face and red hair were in keeping with the insolent cast of his countenance; habitual intoxication and brutal excess were written in every swollen feature. He was followed by a younger man, whose appearance indicated a lesser degree of depravity, only in as far as his age was less mature. But the third was undoubtedly the most remarkable of the three; for he was tall of stature, and though his shoulders were rounded, and he stooped, it might be from age, yet his aspect was commanding, and his gait almost stately. He was dark-browed and ruddy-faced, and though his hair was grizzled by age, his stern black eye sparkled with animation as well as with intelligence; but it was a sullen and sinister expression, betokening a mind neither at peace with itself, nor well-disposed to others.

The old woman drew herself up as they approached, and assuming her customary look of

placid self-possession, awaited their expected address. The dialogue which ensued, and which was but partially comprehended even by Miss Stewart, who overheard it, we shall endeavour to render intelligible to our readers.

“Weel, goodwife,” said the foremost, taking up the discourse, “how are ye the day?—a fine morning this.”

“I have no fault to the morning,” replied Elsie quietly; “but my old eyes canna see its beauty; nor can they see him that greets me. Who is it that wastes his time on one whose foot is already in the grave?”

“Is it who I am, ye wud ask?” replied the fellow; “I’m just a lad from the country up by; and for yoursel’, *venh*,* your eyes may na be sae sharp as they have been at seeing what’s fornent you, but if ye are na the worse belied, they’re able enough yet to see what’s coming. Ye’re a taishtear, good wife, are ye na?”

“And who is he that seeks to ken?” demanded the old woman in reply; “what have I to do wi’ strangers, that I should answer questions thus at their command?”

“Fash no yeresel’, good wife, wi’ what I am,” said the man; “I’m one that can pay for service

* *Wife*, woman.

and civility, and can keep in mind an ill word, or a sulky answer, when I get one; and so ye'd best look till it, afore ye rue it."

"And what service can the like o' you seek from an ould wife like me, man, that ye come so muckle out o' your way to seek her?" demanded Elsie.

"Faith, just a cast o' your skill, venh," replied he; "they're saying up the glen, that ye spaed something about mysel' an' my friends—I wud like weel to ken what it is."

"And who are ye, and who are your friends, man, I would like to know; and that ye maun tell, or what can ye look for at my hands? Ye must think me a born witch, surely, if I'm to spae a wierd afore I ken to whom."

"Weel, goodwife, I see ye're stiff about it; but may be ye'll ken the Glen Shlichard lads, and ye'll hae heard o' Black Kenneth Dhoruv? dinna ye ken, an' hae na ye said something about them, noo?"

"And what should I ken, or what should I say o' the Glen Shlichard lads, or their black captain, but a black cast and an evil time to them?" replied Elsie, with an energy which was unusual to her; "what can they look for wi' their wild lives, but a bad end?"

"Dinna forespeak them, woman! dinna fore-

“speak them !” said the man, with a dark frown, and with equal earnestness, but with a tinge of superstitious alarm in his voice and manner. “They wud fain hae your good word, an’ no your evil tongue with them ; and so come, good wife, tell us what ken ye—what’s biding them?—come, what have they to do?”

“Awa’ wi’ ye !” said the old woman with increasing energy ; “awa’ wi’ ye ! Foul deeds maun hae sharp meeds—as ye hae brewed, so must ye drink. Far, far different are ye from the honest kindly lads that I hae kenned, who, if they did tak’ their malt to the hill, would brew it in peace, and hurt neither man nor beast. Black thieves ye are, and bloody-handed villains ! an’ the Lord winna’ wink on your doings. Awa’ ! the smell o’ guilt is round about ye ; I find it heavy on my very breast while you’re near me ;” and the old woman gasped and shuddered, as if she was actually oppressed by the atmosphere around her.

“Thannumundiaoul ! if I dinna teach you manners !” exclaimed the ruffian, his superstitious respect all swallowed up in rage at her denunciations, and making a forward step as if to seize the old woman. But she sat as calm and motionless after she had spoken, as the Roman senators when the Gallic General entered their till then inviolate assembly ; and the miscreant’s

violence was checked by a sign from the tall dark man behind him.

“Do your worst,” resumed the old woman in the tone of calm resolution; “let out this drap of ould blood wi’ your dirk, or scatter these white hairs to the wind; the miserable withered creature afore you, cares ow’r little about life to mak’ her fear what the Lord permits the like o’ you to do, and far less to say the thing she should na say. But who, after all, made you spokesman o’ the three just now? And why hangs your chief behind? Is he shamed for his trade and his men? or does he fear an old carline like me?”

“Aye, Caillach!” exclaimed the spokesman, stepping back apace, and eying the sybil with a glance of mingled surprise and alarm. “I’m thinking ye see more than ye tak’ credit for, and more than may be just safe. How div ye ken there’s three o’ us?—and why should na I stand for chief?”

“O man!” replied Elsie, with somewhat of a contemptuous sneer on her benevolent countenance, “think ye that the ears maun be shut, because the eyes are darkened? or is the tread of him that obeys as that of him who commands? But woe’s me!—that step—it comes ow’r my ears like an evil dream;—and evil there is near me sure enough, this blessed minute. Come forward,

man!—come forward in the name o' God, and answer to my call!"

"And what would the mother of the dark-eyed Moraig seek of him that was her death?" uttered the deep hollow voice of the tall man, who, thus adjured, stepped forward and confronted her?"

"I kenned it!—I kenned it!—I kenned it was him!" exclaimed Elsie, with a wild cry, and she started up, tossing her arms violently about; but what the meaning of this sudden, and probably involuntary movement was, could not be known, for sense and strength failed her at the moment, and she dropped against the wall of the cottage, close to which she had been sitting. The ladies, who believing from the raised and angry voices, succeeded by the old woman's scream, that the men were actually perpetrating some violence, ran out of the hut, and Miss Stewart just came in time to catch her old nurse in her arms.

"In the name of Heaven, what are ye? and what do you want with this poor old creature?" said Isabelle, addressing the tall dark man, who still stood gazing upon the withered form. The ruffians started at the apparition, and stood for a moment as if confounded and at fault; but he whose words had been the cause of Elsie's agitation, speedily recovered himself.

“Young lady,” replied he, in a tone not deficient in respect, “I request that you will leave this place while you may do it without molestation. With you we seek nothing; but quit that miserable piece of withered flesh: with it we have business that cannot thole delay. Away, lady! or ye may see that which ye would wish unseen.”

“What! leave the poor old woman to *your* tender mercies, ruffian?” exclaimed Isabelle, whose spirit was now roused, and who kindled at the man’s insolent affectation of respect, instead of quailing with fear. “Leave her that ye may murder her?—know ye to whom ye speak?”

“Know *you*—do ye ask?” said the ruffian, scowling on her, and dropping the assumed tone of respect; “yes, I do know ye—more of you than perhaps ye care should be known; and the day may come, when ye shall know me too, to your cost. But once more, I say, take advice—retreat while the coast is clear.”

“Insolent!” exclaimed Miss Stewart, “this spot I quit not while you remain here. Insult us, ye dare not; our cries shall soon bring us aid if ye do not retire.”

“Diaoul! but ye’re bould, my girl,” said the red ruffian; “but, by the hand of my feyther! we shall see how long that will last, if ye dinna

drop the ould caillach. *Anuarorst!**" exclaimed he, setting his teeth, as he seized hold of the poor old creature, and shook her violently in spite of Isabelle's exertions; "a bad end to ye!—give us what we want, and what we will have; give it us peaceably, or I'll hae it out o' your cursed old thrapple!"

The shrieks of the ladies now mingled with the execrations of the ruffians, the lesser of whom was endeavouring to shake the half reviving Elsie into a consciousness of his demands, while the taller and superior was seeking to moderate the indiscreet zeal of his companion. At this moment a whistle was heard, and Tresham appeared upon the brow of the glen, calling to his dogs. In another instant his quick eye caught a glimpse of the ladies, and bounding down through bushes and over rocks, he stood amongst the agitated groupe, almost before they dreamt of his being near them. A single glance told him that something was wrong. "Miss Stewart!—Maria!—good heavens! what means this? Who are these fellows?—Back, scoundrels!—back!—or I'll blow your brains out!" and at the sudden apparition of Tresham, who speedily brought his double-barrelled Manton to full cock and recover, the three

* "A bad hour to you!"

ruffians did instantly fall back. "Who are ye, fellows? and what do ye mean by such insolence?"

"Young man," said the tall man, who had instantly recovered his presence of mind, and who now cast a furious look on the unwelcome intruder, "ye speak to one who fears powther as little as you can do for your life; and one, may be," showing the butt of a large pistol under his coat, "that's as well armed as ye are yeresel'. But it's no' blood we want, not even yours, though it's no' the first time it has been in my power. Our business here the day was no' for evil, or it is neither your speech nor your force that could hinder us from our will. For this ould creature, she might have given a civil answer to a civil question, and that was all we wanted; but she has suffered ow'r muckle from me already: let her end her few remaining days in peace for me. For you, young man, beware!—ye once got into the tod's-hole, and escaped better than ye deserved; dinna try your luck again, for there's more chalked against your name, and all scores may be paid off at once. Be wise, and tak' an honest warning—this country's no' good for your health. Young lady, tak' ye tent too,—there's friends that wish ye a better fortune than ye're seeking for yoursel';—never think of wearing on a stranger the flower that was

planted for a kindly friend, nor strive foolishly against your wierd. Tell your honest father to beware of changing ould friends for new, or ould fashions for new fancies, and let him neither meddle nor make wi' what concerns him not, or he may come by the worse, in spite of those who wish him weel. *Tuiken guillen!*"* Having delivered these words with a very impressive emphasis, he staid no further question, but strode away up the glen followed by his two subordinates.

For some moments Tresham and his fair friends continued silently gazing upon the retreating figures of the ruffians ; at length the former spoke. " This is a most extraordinary business, Miss Stewart," said he ; " in the name of wonder how came these fellows here, and what did they want ?"

" Heaven only knows who or what they are," replied the young lady ; " they came so suddenly upon us, that Maria and I could scarce get into the cottage out of their way, fearing that our presence might tend rather to prolong than to shorten their stay : we only came out on hearing poor Elsie's scream, and know but imperfectly what had passed to occasion it." They then related such portions of the dialogue between the old woman and the ruffians as had reached their ears.

" It is a strange business," said Tresham ; " for

* " Come away, lads."

it does not very well appear what they actually wanted with the poor old creature; and such daring villains too—so brutal—so outrageous!—It is really extraordinary and unaccountable. But I have a guess who the rascals are;—I am sure I know them—” he hesitated; for to have adverted to their allusions to himself, or to have declared his opinion more distinctly, might have created an alarm which he wished to avoid; and before he had decided on how to end his sentence, he was interrupted by a groan from old Elsie herself.

Completely restored to consciousness, the old woman was turning her glassy eyes on every side with a slow fearful movement, as if their visionless orbs sought to discover the cause of the shock she had sustained. “Oh—h! is it even so?” she rather groaned than spoke; “then the earth has na yet got her own, and the vision is true! Who is this that’s near me? Dear, dear child, this is your own hand!—tell me, in the name o’ God, is he gone?—or was he here at all?—or was it another, and thae fearfu’ seeings—?”

“O hush, my good nurse! be quiet and compose yourself,” said Miss Stewart; “no one is here but friends.”

“But who *was* here, darling? tell me that.—O tell me, or my ould weak brain ’ill burst!”

“I cannot tell you who were here, Elsie; some

rude men, whom I do not know, but who frightened us both. But your friend, Mr. Tresham, came up at the moment, and drove them away."

"O then it's true!—I mind noo—yes—I could na mistake that voice. Tell me, dear, was it na a tall handsome lad, wi' black een, an' dark red cheeks, an' black curling hair?"

"No, no, moome, dear; there was no such person here; they were three rude, wicked men, who had some foolish trick in view; there was none young but one, and he was a fair short lad."

"Aye, true;—young—he canna be young noo; no, nor weel-fa'ard. But oh! he was weel-looket once—ow'r weel;—handsome and evil, like the father o' mischief."

"O my good Elsie! don't distress yourself with such fancies; the men were common rude fellows, and they ran away the moment Mr. Tresham made his appearance."

"Aye, God bless him! he's a kind gentleman—his heart is good;—but O let him beware o' yon bad man! If there's an evil spirit on earth, it's in him, that it is. O he goes about seeking whom he may devour!—and I ken—I ken ow'r weel, that there's ill in his black heart e'en noo."

"O hush, dear nurse!—hush!—try not to think of such things just now: this fright has been enough to confuse your senses."

“Ochone, darling! it’s no’ fear that struck me down yon way:—it’s the sad, sad thought o’ what’s past and gone;—it’s the warning o’ the future, dark, dark, and confused though it be. O there was more than your eye, my child, could see in yon wild sight! but the Lord is above a’!” Miss Stewart answered not; for she saw that the brain of her old nurse was in truth overset for the time; that further conversation would but retard the restoration of tranquillity, and that perfect repose was the only effectual medicine for her weak mind. Soothing her therefore with the utmost tenderness, she prevailed upon the old woman to enter her cottage, where having left her under the charge of the girl, the two young ladies returned home with Tresham, resolving to send a person to the cottage, in order to prevent the recurrence of any such insults or alarms.

A few days after this event, the party at Airdruthmore was increased by the arrival of two guests. The one was the laird of Ballytully, who had but just, as he informed them, returned from Edinburgh; the other was Glenvallich, who, crossing the hills with his dogs and gun, reached them just in time for dinner.

“I congratulate you, Miss Stewart, on the continuance of this delightful weather,” observed Glenvallich, when they were seated round the fire

in the evening; "it favours your pleasant and useful occupations. I can trace your hand in many a place, even since I was here last. These cottages near the wood are quite delightful; I am charmed with the taste which the improvement displays."

"Ah! I am glad you approve: you are such an improver yourself that it is gratifying to find you think us right in our small attempts here."

"I don't know what you call small, Miss Stewart; for small and great are, as we know, only relative terms. I fear if my exertions were compared with your judicious, persevering, tranquil course of benevolent improvement, I should be found wanting in the balance."

"Why, I am bound, at all events, to thank you for the compliment, it is said so gravely, though I may entertain my own doubts of being well entitled to it. We must contrive some occupation or other, you know, to amuse us in such an out-of-the-way part of the world; and it is lucky when we can make pleasure and duty coincide. We should stagnate altogether without some such excitement."

"Little fear, I should think, of dullness or stagnation at Airdruthmore, with such inmates, Miss Stewart. Tranquillity—peace—content—no doubt

you must enjoy ; but dull you cannot be—Miss Tresham alone would keep you all alive.”

“ Why, I do my best,” replied that young lady, “ to keep the foul fiend of dullness at the stove’s end ; and generally, I think, we succeed indifferent well. As to tranquillity, it’s a sleepy sort of bliss, and so we sometimes contrive to keep ourselves awake with an adventure—whether altogether amusing or no, I leave others to say.”

“ An adventure !—what, of late ? Pray may I ask what you allude to, Miss Stewart ? I hope no accident happened ?”

“ O no !” replied that young lady ; “ nothing, as it chanced. But call on her who has raised your curiosity to gratify it : a story will not lose by Maria’s telling.”

“ Upon my word, Isabelle, you do me more than justice ; but, indeed, there is no need of adding to its own merits. I can assure you, it was as pretty an adventure as one would wish on a summer’s day—worthy of the days of Roderick Dhu, or Rob Roy, or any of your Highland caterans. One of them looked as black as the best of them, for his life, did’nt he, Harry ?”

“ What, Tresham, was you of the party ? then do tell me what all this means ;—what has happened ?”

“ Why the ladies had a strange rencounter with

certain very ruffianly-looking fellows, who frightened them a little, up in the wood, at old Elsie's cottage. Smugglers they were, I suspect; but we were glad enough to get them off without much question; for they were well-armed truculent-looking dogs, and as I was alone, we might have come off but second best in case of a row."

"But pray do let us hear the particulars. Miss Stewart, have pity on my impatience; and there's Ballytully—see, his eyes betray his painful anxiety!—do tell us all that happened."

Miss Stewart then related the adventure at her nurse's cottage, which was listened to by both gentlemen with a very natural degree of surprise, and on the part of Glenvallich with no small emotion. "Good heavens!" he said, "it is really extraordinary; it betrays a degree of audacity I scarcely could have credited. Smugglers, you think them?"

"I do believe them to have belonged to that respectable fraternity."

"And may I crave, Mr. Tresham, to know *why* you believed the men to have been smugglers?" inquired the laird of Ballytully, who till then had been silent on the subject, but who had listened with profound attention to all that was said.

"Why, sir, are ruffians, such as Miss Stewart

and I have described, so common in these parts, that we may look to find them roaming about gentlemen's houses as matters of course? The men I saw were armed, ready for any desperate rencontre;—who in this country, unless such persons as I have named, are likely to travel so accoutred? Besides, you have heard Miss Stewart observe that they mentioned Glen Shlichard, and that their spokesman admitted his connexion with the gang that lurk there."

"Allow me to ask," said Ballytully, "was their conversation carried on in English?"

"No; in Gaelic."

"O! I bow to Miss Stewart's proficiency in the Gaelic," replied Ballytully, with something of a sneer; "yet, without impugning her literary acquirements in that tongue, may she not have been mistaken?"

"No doubt she might," replied Tresham, "although the distinctness of her account of all that passed seems to tell against such an inference; but in truth, I have some reason myself for believing such to be the fact."

"You, Mr. Tresham! and might one crave your reason?" replied Ballytully, with a start of surprise, which was succeeded by a glance of real alarm and assumed levity, strangely mingled with dislike, as he continued. "But, O! I forgot—it

is not the first interview you have had with *smugglers*, if I remember right."

"You are right, sir, it is not," replied Tresham with an emphasis which recalled the laird to himself, and he proceeded in a more careless tone. "Well, after all, I can hardly believe these fellows to have been such as you say—our Highland smugglers are generally good-natured, easy, thoughtless chaps, who would rather have thought of giving the old woman a dram, and taking off their bonnets to the ladies, than either of insulting the one or molesting the other—they're not such bad chields, the smugglers. I'm thinking they must have been some drunken disbanded soldiers, or fellows upon leave, that wanted a little *sky* with the old woman. She might have passed with them for a witch, you know, easily enough;—she's old and ugly, and that's a sufficient qualification for a witch at any time."

"The men were not drunk," replied Tresham very dryly, "nor were they in the smallest degree like discharged soldiers."

"I have not a doubt, from their conduct, that they were just smugglers," said Glenvallich, "and of the very set you mentioned, Tresham; for in all the Highlands there is not another gang so audaciously impudent. I agree with Ballytully so far, that the common brewers of 'mountain dew,'

however demoralized they may become by a long course of illegal acts, are commonly humble and unresisting, disposed rather to civility than to insolence; but these fellows in Glen Shlichard set decency, as well as the laws, at defiance. They trust to their fastnesses, and to the culpable supineness of the executive officers, and think themselves beyond all risk," added he, with a kindling eye and a sterner tone of voice, "but they may find themselves mistaken."

Tresham, whose eye had accidentally been turned towards Ballytully, as Glenvallich concluded, was confounded at the sudden start and gaze of alarm and suspicion which was cast by that worthy person on the speaker, as he uttered this implied threat. Nor was that uneasiness decreased by discovering that it had been observed, and by one whom it was obvious he beheld with dislike. He smoothed his brow, however, and asked, with apparent unconcern, what Glenvallich meant?—whether government had any new measures in contemplation against these same Glen Shlichard smugglers?

"I don't know that government have any such object in view at present," replied Glenvallich; "but it is, in my opinion, impossible that its officers can continue much longer blind to the excesses of these people."

“ O ! ” replied Ballytully, recovering himself, “ government have other work to do than to hunt a parcel of poor blackguards out of a wild glen ; and, faith, let us poor lairds be as loyal as we may, we can hardly be expected to wish all the stills driven out of the country. What would become of our rents, if it was not for the price these very fellows give our tenants for their barley ? I ’ m sure, Airdruthmore, no one knows that better than ye do—and so does Glenvallich himself, for all he ’ s so hot against the ‘ mountain-dew boys. ’ Egad, take my word for it there ’ s much good, if there ’ s some ill, in the smugglers.”

“ It ’ s a dear-bought good, if it is one,” replied Glenvallich ; “ and I, for one laird, desire it not. I seek nothing better than to see the country clear of them.”

“ Aye, I ’ m afraid we shall suffer by them in the end,” said Airdruthmore. “ There was Macgregor, that had my farm of Balnachree—he sold all his barley one year to these same brewsters, because he got three shillings more a boll for it than others offered him.—And what was the upshot ?—why, de ’ il a farthing has he got, or ever will ; and the poor man was forced to flit, and I must lose the rent, or take his stocking, which, God knows, goes against my heart sorely.”

“ Yes, laird,” said Ballytully, with a significant

look ; “ but mind ye, how many weel paid rents ye got from that same Macgregor, aye, and from others, far, far above the real value of the bit croft—and what man can help a misfortune ? It’s no *you* that should miscall the small stills, at least.”

“ Aye, aye, Ballytully, ye’re always for the brewing lads—the jolly boys—the honest lads, as ye call them ; but for all ye uphold them, faith I cannot agree with you. I thought a little like you once, but years bring wisdom—my opinion has altered ; they’ll do us all a mischief in the end, and that ye’ll see ; and for their impudence, as Glenvallich rightly calls it, is there a park, plantation, or even kale-yard, that is safe from them ? or a gate or a paling that is not beat down ?—and if a forester or a grieve says a word against it, is not a broken head the best answer he’ll get ?—No, no ; I’m like Glenvallich, I seek none of such blessings, and I’m sick of the mischiefs themselves—they would be a good riddance if there was not one in the country.”

“ Well, well, Airdruthmore, this may be your wisdom ; for me, I’m not come to that conclusion yet. But one word I’ll say, and one advice I’ll give ye—let be for let be—trouble not them, and they’ll no trouble you. It’s ill thrusting your hand into a wasp’s nest. Some of your people stopped them, and there was a row. I heard of the business :

but I would lay a wager, that if ye'll say no more about them, ye'll suffer no more from them. If ye do, they're queer chaps sometimes—I would not be cuation for the barn-yard itself."

The eyes of every body present were turned on Ballytully at this extraordinary speech, and marked with surprise the heightened colour and singular emphasis with which the laird delivered it. The sudden pause which occurred in the conversation, recalled his scattered wits. "Aye, Ballytully, ye seem well in their counsels, man; I never thought ye was so far ben with them," said Airdruthmore, laughing, but joining in the look of surprise which went round the company. "I wish you would just give them a good word for me; but, troth, I would still rather keep clear of them altogether."

"Well, Airdruthmore," replied Ballytully, endeavouring to hide his confusion by a laugh, "I do believe it is best; as for my part, I know nothing about the business more than others, but I have always thought 'let sleeping dogs lie' an excellent proverb, and I'm such a fool that I must be always giving my friend a shove into the way I think safest myself, whether I have any business to meddle, or no."

"Well, well, Ballytully, ye're an honest soul I do think; and that's the truth, even if ye were

one of them yourself, which God forbid. But here, man, as ye must aye have your toddy, wine or no wine, take another tumbler of this veritable mountain-dew, which I'll warrant never paid the king a plack of duty; so ye see, say what we like, we must be helping the free trade a little—more fools they that force us to do so, by their short-sighted, straight-laced regulations.”

Soon afterwards, the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room; and in the course of the evening, Glenvallich seized an opportunity of drawing his friend to one side. “That was a singular adventure of the ladies’ and your’s, Harry, to take place in a peaceable land. Had it been among the Pyrenees or in your own dear Spain, one might have thought less of it—but in douce, cannie Scotland!—in the quiet orderly Highlands! one knows not what to make of it. But pray tell *me*, Harry, what was your private reason for believing the men to be smugglers? I have a special reason for my question.”

“Certainly, Charles—not the smallest objection to tell *you*, though I did not choose to speak at the mandate of that blustering fool Ballytully; who, between ourselves, I believe to be no true man—but let that pass. You recollect my own strange adventure in the forest, when I got into the whisky bothy?—Well, one of the three men

who assaulted old Elsie was assuredly the same person who played chief on that occasion, and to whose suspicious inhospitality I owed my comfortless and blindfold midnight journey through the hill?"

"Are you sure of this?"

"Perfectly—the fellow's resemblance to some one whom I had seen before, struck me the instant I saw him—the truth soon flashed upon me; but if any doubts had existed, they would have been dispelled by the oracular allusion and warnings with which he favoured me—these alone would have fixed him as the hero of the whisky-still."

"Well, I am satisfied you are right in all your conjectures. These fellows have become the pest of the country, but I hope their time will be short. I have suffered from them in more ways than one, and the rascals are confident and silly enough in their impunity, to brave me—we shall see the result. Now, Harry, have you a mind for an adventure?"

"O, certainly.--Of what nature is it to be?"

"Why, in one word, I'll tell you—to hunt out and rid the country of this nest of smugglers and ruffians, if possible; at any rate, to restrain their audacity within bounds by inflicting on them a signal punishment, and so inspiring them with some respect for the laws of their country."

“ Well, this sounds well ; but how is it to be done ? ”

“ You shall hear ; but I count on your adhesion, Harry—you wear the king’s colours, and with your zeal and enthusiasm, are the very man to join in—nay, to lead in such an enterprize.”

“ Say no more, my dear fellow—I’m your man. Let us hear the plan of the campaign—how do we proceed—where are your forces—your means ? ”

“ Why, I propose no less than to enter the country of these fellows ; to hunt out and beat up their hiding-places ; to destroy, in as far as may be, their resources ; take as many prisoners as we can ; and thus deal the whole concern such a blow as will convince them that, in spite of their remoteness, they do not lie beyond reach of the law. If we can get hold of one of the leaders it will be a grand catch ; but at all events, I think the object of intimidation may be accomplished.”

“ Good—very good ; and now for the means.”

“ Why, for some time past I have been in correspondence with certain officers of the court of exchequer regarding the state of this country, and they have directed their officials here to hold themselves ready to co-operate with me. We shall have all the excise officers that can be mustered, and a detachment from the crew of the revenue cutter that lies in Loch.—There are some of my own

people who may be depended on, and who know the country well, especially your old friend Duncan Maccombich. I dare say there are services he might like better, to be sure, because he may have to meet some of his old acquaintances in hostile fashion; but I am sure he would lay down his life for his lord, and there is not a desperado of them all more bold and fearless; moreover, he knows every hole and corner of Glen Shlichard, and I count upon him as one of our principal agents in arranging the plan of enterprize."

"And how do you mean to proceed, and when?"

"Why, as to the how, I have, with a military tact which I am sure you must admire, and with no small trouble, by dint of multifarious inquiry, succeeded in drawing up what I depend upon as a tolerably correct plan of Glen Shlichard, with its various passes and corrys, exits and entrances; so that, though I never was much in the glen, I feel myself perfectly acquainted with it. The intention is, in the first place, to secure all these passes by a simultaneous movement, then to push forward by the usual path towards the *toons*, or clusters of bothies in the glen, and the places where they have their brewhouses, so as to take them there, or drive them back upon the guarded passes, where they must fall into the hands of other parties.—What say you to this?"

“On my conscience, it’s a bold and sweeping plan with a vengeance!” replied Tresham; “but have you troops enough, think you, to effect all this? I hear the population of the glen is very great—It wouldn’t do to be beat, you know.”

“O, as for the people themselves, four-fifths of the whole number are women and children, or decrepit old creatures, past work and fighting; and of the remainder, not one-third would think of opposing the officers, supported by a gentleman of the country with his *following*. But, besides all I have mentioned, I have been in communication with the trustees of the property, who have given me full powers to act in this matter, and have placed their factor at my orders;—and though his influence is not omnipotent, still there are many whom his presence would hinder from opposing us openly.”

“Well, well, have with you—make what use you can of me. Faith, I have no objection to a bit of a spree, if it’s only to keep my hand in: I should lose all my military tact and practice else, in these over peaceful regions. When do you purpose commencing operations?”

“Why we must be somewhat sudden, lest the business get wind: it won’t do to loiter when the orders are issued and the troops mustered. I came here to-day on purpose for you, and to see how

the land lay in this quarter. We shall muster at several points on the third night from this, and start at once for our various destinations. But I see plainly that the less is said here, the better. The old laird smarts under the insolence of the villains, but scarcely ventures to oppose them—old feelings are yet too strong; but as for Ballytully, did you mark his strange embarrassment, and stranger language to-night, when the subject was talked of?”

“I did; and I tell you that, in my humble thinking, the fellow’s not honest.”

“I quite agree with you; it is not the first time I have had cause to suspect the gentleman. If he have not some feeling for the lads of the glen, I wrong him foully—not one word therefore to either of them. As for the ladies, why let fall a word of what might make them uneasy? A tenkill, or shooting party, will be an excuse for leaving this to-morrow; nor shall they see us again, until we may have rendered our country some service. But what, after all, do you think could have been the object of these fellows in assaulting the old woman, or in visiting her at all?”

“Why, it is not easy to say. From what Miss Stewart could make out, it seemed as if they required from her some prognostic or augury: possibly regarding a projected enterprize. She

passes, you know, here for something of a prophetess, but nothing distinct could be made out ; it was only conjecture formed from broken sentences, which were gathered during the time they were concealed in the hut."

"Well, as we leave this to-morrow, let us visit the old woman on our way ; we may possibly gather some useful hint from her, or some piece of information to guide us : there can be no harm in the thing, at all events."

"By no means ; nor can any suspicion arise from my going to see her. I am a well-known visitor of hers, and, I believe, a bit of a favourite ---thanks, as I think, to the patience with which I listen to her praises of Isabelle Stewart, rather than to any little presents I may have made her."

"No unpleasing condition of favour, Hal, I dare swear. But come, we have been quite long enough by ourselves ; we may attract inconvenient observation. Let us join the company."

And they had been observed. Two individuals of that company had marked their conference, though with very different emotions. The keen eye of Isabelle Stewart, in whose mind the late adventure still dwelt with painful misgivings, had followed the young men during their conference, and her mind instinctively caught the idea that the subject of their conversation related in some

shape to that unpleasant event. She longed, but dared not, to communicate her doubts and solicit their confidence, but resolved to watch their movements, and shape her conduct by what she should observe.

The lowering glance of Ballytully had also fastened upon the speakers, with mingled hatred and mistrust. Had the good old laird seen that look, unsuspecting and unobserving as he usually was, he could not have failed of remarking its malignant expression, and would have doubtless been puzzled to reconcile its meaning with the good nature and honesty which he was wont to attribute to his neighbour ; and had it caught the attention of its objects, the opinion which they had already begun to conceive of him who wore it, would have received undoubted confirmation.

CHAPTER XI.

A TENKILL.

In parties here and there,
Detached o'er hill and dale, the hunters range
Inquisitive. No haunt unsearched, they drive
From every covert and from every den,
The lurking game. Incessant shouts
Re-echo through the woods.

THE departure of the gentlemen failed not to throw a damp over the inmates of Airdruthmore. The spirits of Isabelle were depressed to a degree which she could only account for upon the vague and unsatisfactory theory of presentiment; for she could not refrain from giving way, in some degree, to a host of gloomy forebodings which assailed her. Irresistibly impressed with a belief that the departure of Tresham with Glenvallich from Airdruthmore, so immediately after the ar-

rival of the latter, was in some shape or other connected with her own late adventure, she would have given the world for the means of questioning either of the gentlemen, could she have done so without the appearance of intrusiveness or indelicacy. But neither of them seemed inclined to yield her such an opportunity ; for to her anxious mind they appeared even to avoid the chance of an interview. It was only on the morrow, when the two young men took leave of their fair friends, that she had it in her power to address a word to either. Assuming then an easy and playful tone, which was foreign to her feelings, she expressed her hopes that their “guardian knight,” aware of the perils to which he left his charge exposed, would not long endanger them by his absence. “Nor will Mr. Tresham forget,” she continued, with a significant look, which called the young man’s blood into his cheek, while her own seemed to catch the reflection, “that his friends feel too deeply the value of his services to be indifferent to his safety ; but are too confident in his prudence to allow themselves give way to uneasiness on his account.”

The laird of Ballytully stared with surprise when he heard their departure announced, but made no remark upon it ; but although it had been understood that his stay was to be of some

duration, he also, very soon after, made an apology for returning home, and taking his leave and his horse, rode away from Airdruthmore.

Glenvallich and his friend found Elsie in her customary seat; her face was paler, perhaps more ghastly than usual, but in no other respect was she altered. The keenness of her hearing enabled her to detect the step of Tresham at some distance; and as he approached her, she addressed him by his name. "Ye'are ow'r good," she said, "to think sae muckle o' an ould wife; but the blessing o' the good and the kind will be on you for it.—But who is that, that's wi' you?—it's a ken't fut, but I canna mind who's aught it—my head's no sae clear as it has been."

"It's the laird of Glenvallich, Elsie," said Tresham, "that has come to see you."

"Macgillieculloch is welcome," replied the old woman, drawing herself up with dignity; "there was friendship and kindred between his fathers and those whom I followed, long syne. And what would Macgillieculloch have of Elsie Macleod?"

"Nothing but good to you, Elsie," replied Glenvallich, "and of that there should be proof, but that I well know you are with those who let you want for nothing.—And now, let me ask you a question; and as it is put for no idle purpose,

Elsie Macleod will surely reply with truth and sincerity."

"Let Macgillieculloch put what question he will—the best answer the ould creture before him can give, shall he have, and Elsie Macleod never says the thing that is not."

"Well then, Elsie, to come at once to the point, I would know from you who those rude persons were, who, some few days ago, when Miss Stewart and her friend were here, misused you, and insulted them?"

The old woman slowly shook her head—"I kenned what ye sought afore ye spoke—but truth must out, hap what may—for weel I wot that seeking to gainsay the decrees of the Most High avail-eth nought.—Glenvallich! they were wicked men—they were o' the wild Glen Shlichard lads, who care little for law or right—aye, and the worst o' them a' was there a' mong them—Ochone! that I should hae lived to hear his evil tongue again!"

"Well, we guessed so much, Elsie—and what might be their business with you?"

"It was," replied the old woman, solemnly, "to change if they could the will o' Providence itsel'! to mak' void its outspoken word—for it has said 'that the wicked shall perish in his way;' and how then can they think to escape; well did he ken the awful visitation with which it has pleas-

ed the Lord to afflict his servant, and they would hae turned to their own unlawful purposes a dispensation of the Most High! They sought to look into the secrets o' Providence; to force his servant to declare what evil or what success awaited their wicked courses—but small comfort did they get frae me, and as little would they hae got had the dirk been at my throat.”

“Then their inquiry pointed at no particular object—they spoke of no enterprize on hand—of no evil supposed to be impending?”

“It was na to me, or the like o' me, they would declare their evil deeds. I sought no confidence from them, and they gave me none; they sought to wring from my heart the thing that concerned them—to make me the glass through which the light o' wisdom was to shine on them, while it remained in darkness itsel'—but they failed, grossly failed, and departed in their ignorance and iniquity. And now, laird of Glenvallich, and you, kind-hearted Englishman, I have answered your questions; ye must now hear my words—for to you I declare what from them I concealed—I ken what's in your thoughts;—ye're thinking to follow these ruffians. It's now many days since I seed your forms in the strife, and often since syne has the same sight returned; but mark the word o' one who wishes you both weel—*evil will come o' it*; whatever comes to

you—evil awaits others from your work—beware of Glen Shlichard and all its evil fouk—let them live and die in their sin, for ‘the wages of sin is death.’ But keep ye from them—tak’ an ould woman’s advice—meddle not with them, or ye will repent of your deed.”

“But my good Elsie,” said Tresham, “if you would have us profit by your words, you must speak your meaning plain—tell us clearly what we have to dread—what is it makes you suppose that we are going to Glen Shlichard—and what have you seen regarding us that should make us uneasy?”

“Young man,” replied Elsie, with a slight shake of her head, “ye wear your heart ow’r much in your hand to keep its thoughts a secret—but it is na o’ that I wud speak—ask your ainsel—have ye had no proof that the warnings of ould Elsie are honest warnings, and that her word has the power o’ truth? No, the sight may be dim, and the mind may wander, but the thing that comes ow’r me yon way never deceives. O that all could be seen or none, for thae wavering flichtering sights are awfu’!—but the Lord’s will be done! what he thinks fit to show—that I maun tell, and what it’s his pleasure to hide, may he keep me from seeking to discover.”

“But what is it that you have seen regarding

us, my good Elsie?—if we knew that, we might judge of how to act, and shape our conduct accordingly—but what can we do when your warning is so imperfect?”

“And how can I tell ye more, young man, when it’s no shewn to mysel’—or is it for the tongue o’ flesh to tell, or the ear o’ flesh to hear, the fearfu’ strivings an’ groans o’ the spirit that’s forced to bear stamp’t on it in fiery signs the evils and miseries that must fall on friends and kindred, and to hear the cries and wailings o’ them that are to suffer, long, long afore they are uttered? I cannot tell you what I saw, or how I saw it; but ye was there, Glenvallich, and your friend—dimly and wildly striving wi’ many a fierce Highland man—but a’ was faint as in a mist, an’ it swam afore my eyes: I kenned by that, that it was still far off—for whiles I’ll see the same thing ow’r and ow’r; and first it will be dark—dark—an’ syne it ’ill come plainer an’ plainer, till the very faces o’ them that I’ll see will be glouring on me.”

“And how long may it be, my good Elsie, since you first saw this vision regarding Glenvallich and myself?”

“It’s just fourteen days come the morn,” replied Elsie; “I was my lone in the gloaming, for the lassie had gone down to the house for some milk,

an' it tuk me like a dwaum—and wild lights glanced across my eyes, and then they opened, an' I seed a wild glen, and a fearsome hurry there was, and men and women running, but excepting yourself, Mr. Tresham, and Glenvallich, and one other, I could na' tell who they were——”

“ And who was that other ? ” inquired 'Tresham.

“ One whom I canna and winna name,” replied Elsie, mildly but resolutely ; “ but where he is, little's the good can come, for the spirit of evil itsel' is scarcely worse nor him ; weel did I ken him, and weel did he ken me, for it's the same that spoke wi' me four days ago—the same that ye drove awa' from me, Mr. Tresham ! ”

“ Aye ! and was that the man ? Then I know him too.”

“ *You* know him ? Ochone, dinna say so, my dear young gentleman ; it canna, an' it ought na to be : where could ye have known that wicked man ? ”

“ Our acquaintance was short and accidental, Elsie ; but we may meet again, and then probably I may know something more of the fellow.”

“ May the Lord himsel' forbid ! ” exclaimed she ; “ little good ever cam' to them that met him, whether in friendship or in strife. O that he was in his grave, and at peace ! I wish him no

worse, and less wud leave him free to work the ill his wicked heart inclines to ; but it's no' for us to forespeak him—he's in the Lord's hand, and canna work but as he is permitted. But O, Mr. Tresham, dinna go to Glen Shlichard, little is the good and muckle is the ill to be got there ; and what hae ye to do wi' them that's there?"

"Why, my good Elsie," replied Tresham, assuming her own tone and strain of arguement, "if it is my fate to go, I must go—you forget that such revealments inevitably happen—if it is the will of Providence, should I attempt to resist it?"

The effect of this appeal was immediate and conclusive.

"Ow'r true ! ow'r true !" said the old woman shuddering and wringing her withered hands, "an' what am I that wud seek to do so ! the will o' God be done then ! and may he direct all things for the best. O may he avert the evil that I hae cause to dread !"

"Singular, certainly," said Glenvallich, after a pause of some minutes, when they had quitted the old woman's cottage and resumed their way. "That old creature now, believes as firmly that all her dreams are prophetic revelations, and that every vision she sees carries with it a decree of fate, as if she existed in an age of miracles, and had

the most indubitable proofs of being divinely inspired."

"She does assuredly believe in their correctness," said Tresham; "and faith, with some show of reason, for very many of her predictions are verified, and her visions do frequently seem to have been the foreshadowings of truth."

"Aye, Harry; and have you become a convert to the doctrine of *Taishtearach*? have you been persuaded to place your head under the seer's mantle? What miracle has worked this conversion, pray?"

"Conversion! no, I'm not exactly a convert yet."

"Well, then, this change of opinion?"

"Why what would you have? Does not every Highlander, gentle and simple, swear to the existence of the taishk, as they call it? don't they pledge truth and honour on the proof they offer? Have I not heard a hundred instances and facts related by persons whose veracity and intelligence are unquestionable? and have I not in my own person had a pregnant proof, if not of the positive existence of the faculty, at least of a very wonderful coincidence between prediction and event?"

"Aye? as how, I pray?"

"Why, you remember that desperate flood we

had here last September, and my sound ducking and narrow escape from the death of a blind puppy. Assuredly this old woman did predict that business—in a dim dubious way, to be sure—but still clearly enough to be recognized. She gave a description of me before she could have known any thing whatever about me, and declared she had seen me wallowing and striving in the flooded waters.”

“ Ah ! I did hear something of the sort, but not the particulars, till now.—So it is true, that old Elsie did predict that business?—Well, I take myself to be as little of a visionary as most men, and can laugh like others at superstition and its dark world of terrors;—but I cannot consent to abandon my judgment entirely to the reasonings of sceptics and the sophistry of metaphysicians. When the striking and unaccountable facts which we hear of—singular coincidences as they are called by such reasoners—are satisfactorily explained on natural causes, then, and not till then, shall I be convinced that all preternatural agency is a fallacy, and that Providence never does directly interfere in the affairs of this sublunary world.”

“ Faith, Charles, it is a dark subject, and one which I little care to bring to the test of cool rigid philosophy;—we arrive at no satisfactory conclu-

sion by such a process, and are forced to confess, after all, that our powers are unequal to the task we would impose on them.—Laugh as you will at my weakness, old Elsie's prognostics are not entirely without effect on me. I don't quite like these dark intimations of hers, though never so well prepared for the worst."

"What, Harry? intimidated by the predictions of an old woman!—wavering!—Do you see any thing dangerous or imprudent in my plan? If you do, say so frankly, and we will alter it; or if you like it better, do not meddle with it at all; far be it from me to bind you against your own conviction."

"Pshah, Charles! that's going too far—don't imagine me either so much of a blockhead or a coward;—no, no. If I deny not, neither do I affirm—but neither conclusion should alter my resolution. What, man? by old Elsie's own rule, if I believed her vaticinations, should I not also be a predestinarian, and hold the doctrine that seeking to avoid one's fate were both sin and folly: but all this is stuff—come what may, I go with you. I am interested in the business—the cause is a good one, and the issue is in the hands of Him without whose permission not a sparrow can fall."

Their conversation then turned upon their proposed expedition; and after a long but pleasant

walk, they reached a point where their ponies were in waiting. By their means, the gentlemen soon reached the end of the Loch, where a smart pulling boat received them, and conveyed them by six in the evening to Inverallich.

The arrangement and details of their enterprize now absorbed the whole attention of Glenvallich and his friend. Duncan Maccombich, the forester, was called to their counsels, and it was agreed that Mr. Maclean, the factor of the Glen Shlichard estate, together with one of the most active riding-officers of the excise, should meet them at a retired farm some few miles distant; for it was rightly judged that the arrival of two such unusual guests at Inverallich would be so remarkable as probably to arouse suspicion in quarters where it was most desirable to have it lulled to sleep. This meeting took place accordingly, and the scheme of operations underwent a full and final discussion. The factor, who was well acquainted with the ground, and who had taken up the matter with zeal and judgment, proposed that trusty persons should be sent out to collect intelligence regarding the existing haunts and operations of the smugglers. That an active brew was going on, had already been ascertained by the strings of shelties loaded with sacks of the new barley, which had been observed passing up to the glen; and an extensive seizure was

anticipated by the officer, if the various depôts could only be discovered. The greatest difficulty was to pitch upon proper persons to act the part of spies—men who should be sufficiently acquainted with the intricacies of the place, and yet not well enough known by its inhabitants to run the risk of detection—hardy, active, and daring, yet cautious, wary, and intelligent.

Three persons were, after due consideration, pitched upon for this service, of whom the principal was Duncan Maccombich himself. It was not, as had been anticipated, without some reluctant scruples that honest Duncan undertook a duty which certainly carried with it the appearance of treachery to a fraternity of which he once had been a member ; but a little persuasion served to convince him that the part assigned to him was not only expedient, but highly honourable. The desire of his master—his feudal superior—would alone indeed have been sufficient to command his devoted service ; but there was in the duty itself something exciting, and congenial to his habits, which disguised whatever was revolting, and rendered it not unacceptable to his taste. It required the patient endurance, the acute circumspection, the keen eye, the sharp ear, and the indefatigable hardihood of a Highland hunter, no less than the courage and presence of mind of a soldier. Per-

haps the forester derived a stern satisfaction from the thoughts of revisiting his old haunts under his altered circumstances ;—perhaps the gloomy passion of revenge had its share in this mingled state of feeling, if, as might sometimes be gathered from his own words, he had at one time suffered both in fame and fortune, from those who at that time inhabited Glen Shlichard.

There was but one more difficulty which puzzled the confederates, and this was to contrive the means of assembling so considerable a force as would be required, in the vicinity of the point to be attacked, without exciting an alarm which might frustrate their objects. But the suggestion of Glenvallich on this matter was, after fitting consideration, adopted. Shooting expeditions, of various descriptions, and for game of all sorts, were common at the season, and it was proposed that a Tenkill should be held in the woods of *Roi-chills*, a part of Glenvallich's estate which marched with Glen Shlichard, and which abounded with roe, blackcocks, woodcocks, and sometimes was the haunt of red-deer. This would afford a plausible pretext for assembling a great number of men, as foresters, gamekeepers, beaters, &c., at one of the most important points. The excise officers, with the cutter's crew, were to be led simultaneously to the various passes, so as to command

all the issues from the glen, and to lie there in ambuscade, but with discretionary powers to advance, or support each other, as might be found expedient. The military experience of Tresham enabled him to make some useful suggestions in the details of these arrangements; and the several parties into which the whole force was subdivided, were assigned to various leaders: one was placed under his own command; one under that of Mr. Maclean, the factor; a third fell to the charge of the surveyor, Davidson; and the last remained with Glenvallich himself. All Tresham stipulated for was, that his friend Duncan Maccombich, so soon as he should have returned from his reconnoitring duties, should be placed at his orders as guide and assistant; and this was the more readily conceded, as he was the only one of the leaders who possessed no local knowledge of the ground.

At a *toon*, or small collection of bothies, situated near the foot of the Roichills wood, accordingly, upon the appointed day, a muster of the country was held—for many of the neighbouring gentlemen had been invited to partake of the sport; and so extensive were the woods, and so intricate the corries, that the hunt was expected to continue for two full days. Not less than twenty gentlemen with their attendants were thus assembled, in quarters which most modern sportsmen

would have held very insufficient, although the whole accommodation of the place had been put into requisition for the occasion. But to Highlanders, many of whom had lain untented on the plains of Maida or of Egypt, or who had bivouacked in the fields of Spain and Portugal, such temporary privations were but matter of jest and amusement,—it was to them only a capital scramble. The weather fortunately was fine, clear, and frosty. Materials for fuel, peats and wood were in abundance at their hands, and oceans of good whisky-punch, in flowing bowls, excluded all cold from the inward man, while the glowing embers warmed them without.

Mirth and enjoyment prevailed among all ranks. The gentlemen, warmed with creature comforts, talked high of their promised sport, calculated the chances of success, recounted past exploits, laid bets upon the future—spoke of their capital shots, their severe chases, the hairbreadth 'scapes of destined prey; boasted the goodness of their dogs, and hinted at the prowess of the masters—till at length, on mattrass or on straw, the whole gradually sunk in sleep, to wake on the morrow to the realities which had lately occupied their memories or imaginations.

The morning dawned at length. A hearty dram served as preface to a most solid and savoury, if not an elegant breakfast. The excellence

of a true Highland breakfast has often been both said and sung; and when that meal is made the preliminary to a Highland hunting match, we can assure our English readers that no diminution is admitted of in the substantial part of its admirable qualities. Dire was, on this occasion, the destruction of ham, both pork and mutton, of steaks and collops of venison—for the gamekeepers had in some sort anticipated the objects of the day—of kippered salmon, smoaked haddocks, of eggs, butter, and cheese—of bread, both oat and wheaten, and of the various liquids which the majority preferred to the thin potations of tea and coffee.

At length the most persevering were brought to a stand still—the signal was given; the sportsmen rose from their repast—indued their *graith* and shouldered their fowling-pieces. Game-bags were buckled on, smart gamekeepers and well-dressed Highlanders, “kilted to the knee,” bustled about, while bare-legged, red-shanked gillies, ran hither and thither for clubs and staves to beat the bushes. And now there was a shouting and whooping, and roaring out of orders, and thundering out of names; and baying and howling of dogs; and many a lash and curse was given to restrain the impatient, or drive back the intrusive; for, besides the nobler and privileged quadrupeds, there was not a “cur of low degree” in the toon but what was astir and eager for the sport.

At length some degree of order was obtained, and parties, headed by guides and keepers, were seen streaming off towards the several passes by which experience had taught that the game would seek escape; and a curious observer might have distinguished the raw fresh hands among these parties from the older and more skilful hunters, by the quick rapid pace with which, strong with rest and food, they breasted up the steep braes, passing the others, who, wise by experience, took it coolly, and by steady and measured pace gained the same ascent.

The rest of the keepers and the gillies, in the mean time, some taking a higher, others a lower direction, pressed forward to the end of that portion of the cover which was first to be beat, so as to inclose the game and drive it towards the sportsmen stationed in the passes. This was done in silence, and the patience of the younger hands was well tried before they were called into action.

After awhile, however, the deep bay of a hound might be heard; and then another, and another, as in succession they struck the scent of some animal; and the foremost of the party might hear the whirr of wings, as a blackcock or heath-hen, was roused from its haunt. Distant shouts and the crash of boughs were the next sounds that struck upon the ear, and prepared the eager sportsmen

for the coming game. Rousing themselves from the cover, where perhaps the knowing ones had lain until this moment, every man now took post behind some tree or bush, with keen glancing eye, and foot thrown forward, and finger on the trigger. And now the quick and practised hunter might occasionally detect among the boles of the trees the shrinking form of the beautiful roe-deer;—now stepping softly forward, with back-thrown head, and timid reverted eye—now bounding on apace, then stopping short, snuffing the air, and gazing around to discover the cause of so unusual an alarm. Hares skirred about, and the rush and the whistle of wings became more frequent.

At length, a sharp report, ringing more sharply in the frosty air, and rattled back by many echoes, proclaims to the ambushed sportsmen that the work of death has begun; but the more experienced might detect, from the quick succession of three or four shots in the same quarter, that the job has not been *cleanly* done—that the victim has not fallen by the first fire. The attention is rapidly called to another quarter, where three or four dropping, but not continuous, shots, declare that they have each been aiming at separate objects; and those whom the tide of sport has not yet reached, begin to speculate impatiently upon their neighbour's success. But all such speculations

are quickly suspended by the fast coming claims on each man's own regard, as blackcock, or hare, or roe, now thoroughly roused, sweep past with the swiftness of lightning—swift almost as the fire-winged lead which brings them bleeding to the ground. The clang of fowling-pieces, and the whistling of shot increase, until one might fancy a strong party of skirmishers actively engaged in the thick cover.

At length, however, the game ceases to pass, and the firing decreases to a single dropping shot now and then. The first of the beaters are seen advancing through the copse wood; the tongues which have so long been tied in anxious silence are unloosed, and a hundred rapid exclamations may be heard referring to the success of each sportsman in this short but pithy burst. “Ho! you Kenneth, pick up that blackcock at your foot—no, not there—more to your right.” “There’s a poor grey hen not far off, mauled by you, Craig-leach.”—“Here’s two hares, gentlemen—whose are they?”—“Mine, mine; where did you find them? I shot at one just by that holly-bush—I’ll swear I tumbled her.” “This was at the white birch stump, yonder to the left.” “O, then its mine—there, bag it for me, Jack—I’ve a brace of woodcocks, too.” “I say, Robinson, call one of your dogs here—I struck a roebuck there,

not two yards from where you're standing. I broke its leg—it can't be far off—the dog will find it to a certainty." "Aye, Tom, that's always the way *you* kill your game," observed another, coolly, "see *my* fashion of doing the thing;" and he pointed to a noble roebuck which, with its throat ready cut, lay at his feet. "You thought you hit it—but the beast might have been in the corry-aultrichan by this time, but for this slug of mine," &c. &c.

The sportsmen now mustered together—the game was counted and stowed away, and the whole party then proceeded to the next division of the cover, where a similar process was attended by corresponding results. At length they reached a deeper, wilder district of the forest, where not only roe in greater abundance, but red deer were said to haunt, and where, only on the previous day, they were informed, two noble stags and four or five hinds, had been seen. It is true, that stags were by this time out of season, and not fit to kill; but they were always worth looking at, and a fat yell hind would be no bad addition to their day's sport.

It was a striking scene for those who had an eye or a soul for the magnificence of nature. The dell was deep and dark, and the level sunbeams of the season had not penetrated its recesses, nor turned

to dew the thick hoar frost that powdered every tree and bush on the mountain-side, changing the brown leaves of the gnarled oak into silver filigree, and the long pendant boughs of the weeping birch into glittering fringes. The high peaks and ridges of the mountain rose sharp and clear against a brilliant sky ; but a heavy vapour still floated in the hollows, stealing lazily up the courses of the half-frozen streams ; and the fern and the heather, and the rank grass, crouched beneath the feet of the hunters, as they brushed through the cover. As if in contrast to this still and death-like scene, one single grey peak, with the brae beneath, lay gleaming in the chill-red sunbeams.

“ If there’s a deer in the glen the day, Mr. Tresham,” said Duncan Maccombich, who was at his elbow, “ he’ll be in yon newk among the fir-trees below the grey craig there. The deer ken weel what a blink o’ sun’s worth in a December day—and thon’s a bra’ loun hole for them to lie in the day. Keep by me, whatever ye do, an’ I’m thinking, if there’s a chance going, ye’ll no’ be far from it. But ye’ll no’ touch the staigs,—they’re no’ worth a preen the noo—it’s rank murder to kill them ; but if there’s a good fat hind passes, dinna spare yere shot.” Tresham was too well aware of the forester’s experience to neglect his counsel ; so when Duncan, in conjunction with his master and

the other keepers, had arranged the positions of the party, he slipped off, followed by Henry towards the point he had indicated, which was still nearly a mile distant.

The ground was extremely rough, and the copse-wood so thick, that to thread its mazes was very laborious; but, following the steps of his indefatigable guide, Tresham soon found himself beneath the clump of fir-trees. "Ye see that grey scaur, sir," said the forester; "there, where the water comes down whiles—it's there ye must go up;—it's a gay bit pull, but ye'll no' mind that: and ye may stand behind thon grey stone aside the ould birch stump. If there's a deer on this side the corry, he'll be up that pass and awa' to the hill by the brae above. Haste you, sir—the dougs 'ill be loose 'ore you're there—I most be off to the beaters."

It was truly, as honest Duncan had the grace to admit, a "good tight pull;" but Tresham was too eager to allow himself be arrested in his speed by so trifling an impediment. Resolved to strike only at high game, he withdrew the charge of his double-barrelled Manton, replacing it with a single bullet in one barrel and slugs in the other. This done, he ensconced himself behind the grey stone which Duncan had indicated, and kept "a bright look out" down the corry.

He had scarcely sat thus for ten minutes, when a rustling in the bushes at some distance above him arrested his notice, and was followed by the rattling down of some stones, as if the gravel had been disturbed by the foot of some passing animal. Supposing it might be a deer, Tresham cast his eyes around, cautiously raising his head above the stone ; but after a careful survey, being unable to make out any thing, he concluded that he had been mistaken, and resumed his seat.

In a little, the baying of the dogs and crackling of boughs was heard again ; shouts were renewed, and the whole bustle of the tenkill once more filled the air. This animating concert continued for a while, when the warning cry, “ Mark ! red deer ! ” uttered by one of the keepers, resounded faintly, but distinctly, from below, and set every one who heard it doubly on the alert.

Tresham heard it too, and set his teeth and held his breath with eagerness, as with his gun ready cocked he crouched beneath the stone, and strained his eyes down the hollow. It was an interesting pause—but the very beatings of his heart became audible, when he heard distinctly the pattering of hoofs in the pass. Some moments of exquisite suspense succeeded, but they were terminated by the appearance of a noble stag, of “ ten tynes ” at least, who, tossing his antlers on high, bounded up

the gravelly ascent within twenty yards of the ambush, followed by two hinds.

Eager as Tresham was, and sorely as the sight of so noble a prize tried his virtue, he yet retained presence of mind to refrain from useless murder, and to select his victim—perhaps the thought, “What would Duncan think of me, if I were to behave like an ignorant cockney on this occasion?” might have had some share in saving the gallant stag—and the “monarch of the woods” passed by unharmed. Not so his unfortunate companion: colour, size, every thing marked her as a prize which no practised sportsman would let slip; and before she had made another leap, the bullet struck her in the breast, and cleft her very heart. With one bound in the air she fell, and rolled down the hill, frightening and scattering to right and left, several others which were following up the pass.

Up started the young Englishman with a shout and a bound. “Capital shot, by Jove!” burst from his lips in spite of the caution acquired from many injunctions of his friend Duncan’s. “A thousand curses on the hand that fired it!” exclaimed a deep rough voice from above him; and in a moment he felt the wind of a bullet whistle past his ear, and heard the crack of a musket, the smoke of which issued from a bush not twenty yards distant. “What the devil means that?”

Who the devil are you?" exclaimed Tresham, as he sprung towards the place. "One, young man, who will meet you yet, when there may be less help at hand, and who does na often miss his mark, as he did just now," replied the same deep voice; and Tresham beheld the same individual who had met him in the whisky bothy, and who had defied him at Elsie's cottage, come full into view from the bush where he had lain. "Stop," cried the young man, as the other turned to retire, "tell me who you are, and why you seek my life in so ruffian-like a manner?" and he still pressed forward to seize him.

"I neither stop, nor speak at your command," replied the man; "and if ye would sleep in a whole skin, stir not another step to follow me."

"Not stir; we shall see that—have a care—I have a barrel still left, and I will fire if you do not instantly stop."

"So have I," said the fellow, showing a heavy pistol, "and I will fire if you advance a step." He took advantage of Tresham's momentary pause to spring aside into a thicket, where he was lost to the view; and the young man, ignorant of the nature of the ground, thought it folly to pursue where life must be risked without a chance of effecting any good purpose. He therefore retired, and taking his course down the pass, proceeded to

secure his prize, resolving to communicate this unexpected rencountre with all speed to Glenvallich and his friend Maccombich.

The day closed in at length, and the party, wet and weary, but loaded with game and in high spirits, returned to their humble quarters. Glenvallich was exceedingly struck with Tresham's adventure, which he was at first disposed to view as a symptom unfavourable to the result of their enterprize. But Maccombich was of a different way of thinking. "No," said he; "that fellow, who'll be one of their chiefs, will have heard o' the tenkill, and has come to see what we're after, an' may be, to pick up a bit o' deer's flesh himsel' if a chance cam' in his way;—he kent that pass weel, it seems—it's a sure sign there's no fear taken in other quarters when he's here the day. The chield will tak' warning noo, and be off after what has happened, for he'll believe we hae nothing in our heads but to kill deer and blackcock."

"Duncan's right," said Glenvallich, after a moment's reflection, "and our continuing the sport to-morrow will complete the deception.—And now, Maccombich, to turn the tables on them—be cautious—you see how much must depend on your wit and zeal.—Tresham, we'll join the company—we must not suffer any alarm or suspicion to be taken now."

The evening and night were spent much in the same way as the foregoing one, and great was the discussion regarding the various exploits of the day ; but none had secured a prize equal to Tresham's fat hind.

“ Fairly struck, and cleanly killed, by my honour,” observed one of the party, as he viewed the carcass of the animal with a knowing eye ; “ but how, the deuce ?—you missed it, then, with your first barrel ?—I'm sure I heard two shots, yet there's only one shot-hole that I can see ?”

“ Come, come, Balrispie,” said Glenvallich, stepping in to the aid of his friend, who was not quite prepared with a reply to this unexpected inquiry, “ what needs you chalk shot in that way. Tresham has done the job cleanly and sportsmanlike—I'll have no ‘ backspeering ’ him about hits and misses. Just do ye as well to-morrow, my friend, and ye shall be cock of the hunt.”

On the morrow, when the party turned out as before, the well-known portly figure of Maccombich was missed from among the hunters—he was gone, it was understood, on some arrangements connected with the day's sport, to a distant point of the wood. Others might also have been missed from the ranks of the attendants, but such was the number that crowded the bothies and made up the field, that their absence passed unregarded.

We shall not detain our readers with a detail of this day's sport. It was more early over than the preceding, and terminated the hunting for the time. The greater number of the guests, indeed, took at once to their ponies, and set out on their return homewards, taking advantage of their knowledge of the ways, and aided by a brilliant moon ; but a few still remained with their host, who, having, as was understood, some private business to arrange in the neighbourhood, took up his abode for the night at a toon somewhat removed from that which had afforded quarters to the hunters on the previous one.

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXPEDITION.

Haste! Duncan Donald, Dugald man,
Haste! tak' yere sword and spear,
Well gar the traitors rue the hour
That ere they ventured here?

By one hour after midnight all was still and solitary in the huts of Balleviuch, for the hunters had left the glen, and the laird and his friends had departed. A moon, not greatly past the full, had risen over the mountain-tops, shedding a placid light over the thick hoar frost of a December night; and the party having still a considerable way to go before dividing each to his separate course, shook off the short slumber in which they had indulged, and ere the turn of the night silently quitted the place.

The crisping of the frosted herbage under foot

was the only sound heard as they took the dubious pathway in Indian file, and proceeded, slanting up the hill side at a smart pace. "Does this scene in any degree recall to your memory your military escapades in the Peninsula, Harry?" said Glenvallich to his friend, as they walked together. "Why, it has a smack of old times, I must confess," replied Tresham; "not much of 'pomp and circumstance,' indeed, nor does our force appear very imposing; but there is somewhat of excitement in the affair, and this frosty air is bracing and exhilarating, to say the least of it—*Faute de mieux*,' it may serve to remind one of a night march. I remember when four companies of my regiment were detached to surprise a redoubt near —; it was a sharp frost like this, and the country was not dissimilar—the hills higher, to be sure, and the rocks more scarped and peaked—more Sierra-like. We took the post, and occupied it; but a fifth of the poor fellows that marched against it never marched again—they remained where we put them, under a mound in rear of the redoubt. I hope we sha'n't have quite such warm work to-morrow."

"God forbid!" said Glenvallich; "I hope our measures are too well taken to dread much resistance; and, in fact, unless where the assailants are very weak, and perhaps conduct themselves harshly

or insolently, it is rare that determined resistance is attempted. I trust we shall not have to strike a blow."

"Well, I hope not; I am sure I should not know how to pull a trigger, or aim a blow at the fellows, I have been now so long happy amongst: faith, I love the very plaids and bonnets they wear, too well to hurt them."

"What think you, Hall, of the plaid and bonnet that took the snap-shot at you yesterday in the pass?—there was little love in that, I think.

"Ah!" as to him, I do think I could find in my heart to return him part of his compliment—I might try to knock *him* down. I wonder what ails the fellow at me?—how the deuce can I have given him such mortal offence?"

"Why, it is not easy to guess, unless he owes you a grudge for the fright you gave him in popping so mal-a-propos upon his bothy, and costing him a tough night's work to get rid of you. I hope we may catch ^{him} alive, for I don't doubt he's a principal leader of the gang—perhaps the notorious Kenneth Dhornv himself."

"Well, I shall be glad if it so happens; but if you get hold of that fellow without a hard blow or two, my name is not Harry Tresham. But pray what *are* we to do in case of resistance?—in self-

defence, I know, we must act with decision; but if they merely offer a passive resistance ——”

“Why, my friend, we must look the matter fairly and steadily in the face—unpleasant as extremities may be, we have a duty to perform. It is one, I grant, which I have volunteered for, in great measure, but not the less imperative on that account. It was from a sense of its importance that I engaged in it, and the same persuasion will support me in going through with it, however painful the task. I come to maintain and enforce the law, and am prepared to do so with all fitting authority. You know I am a justice of the peace, and deputy-lieutenant of the county, and all that; the men with me are principally sworn constables, or are in the king’s pay, and we are provided with ample warrants to search for, seize, and arrest all persons found, or strongly suspected, of committing illegal acts. If any one resists such warrant, those intrusted with enforcing it must do their duty, happen what may. But I trust we shall need nothing of all this, and that so decisive a measure will give a fatal shock to this vicious system.”

The moon was nearly setting behind a high mountain, as after a very rough march they reached the brow of a hill which hung over a great hollow hid in darkness and mystery, by the

gloom of the hour. A confused assemblage of mountains, varying in form and size as much as in colour and distance, lay spread before them, inclosing a glen or valley of great but irregular limits, and winding among their converging shoulders beyond the range of vision. A silver gleam, at some distance, indicated a little mountain lake; and undulating threads of the same faint brilliancy betrayed the course of the streams which fed it.

“What think you of the nest of these mountain rogues?” said Glenvallich to his friend, in a low voice, while he pointed out the wide tract at their feet, as it lay varied with masses of black shadow and waning moonlight, in the chill haze of a cloudless winter’s morning.

“I think,” replied his friend, “that if the place looks no worse by the light of the sun than it now does by that of his pale sister, the rogues deserve credit for their choice; and so far shall I be from wondering at their wish to keep their hold, that I might be very well inclined to dispute possession with them for myself.”

“Well, possession for the time, at least, I hope we soon may have. Here we separate. Near this place our scouts should meet us:—give your signal, Kenny.” At this command Kenny, putting his finger to his lips, drew a long low swelling whistle, which, on being repeated, was answered

from a hollow to their right ; and three men were speedily observed emerging from its shade. The tall active figure of Duncan Maccombich was easily distinguishable in the first of these persons, and in a few seconds he joined the party.

“ Well, Maccombich, you are punctual, I find—what news with you—what have you seen ? ”

“ Ou, I’ve seen enough, sir, if that was all—there’s no want o’ business here, that’s sure.”

“ But is all safe ?—no alarm taken ? ”

“ Weel, sir, I could hear o’ none—but they’re no chields to be easy ta’en of their guard—muckle may be going on unknowing to me.”

“ But how did you proceed—for we must be doing ;—tell me what you did and saw ? ”

“ Weel, your honour ; when we got to the braes, in the grey o’ the mornin’ like, we tuke our separate beats, and I keepit through the Kaillecroisk wood to the Stronemore. From that I could count six fires in places that I kenned o’ ; and whan the light begood* to be strong, there was the blew reeks rising aboove the wuds and the corries. I went quaetly on thro’ the wud, round the shouther o’ Benstarrach, an’ syne doon the black corry that’s at the fut o’ it—Corry-eiran, they call it—an’ just as I was leuking ow’r a wild craig that’s on the east side, what did I see but four or five lads wi’ three

* Began.

or four bit lassies hard at work round a great copper, just in the newk o' a burn. ' Weel,' thocht I, ' the gauger that comes by the *Kheimnamearlach* * pass, winna miss o' you ;' so I just marked the place, an' went round the corry wi' as little work as I could, and whan I cam' to the next height, there was six garrons wi' sacks on their backs going up the way o' Aultrian. There was aye a famous houff in that burn, so I thocht I wud just see the brewst stowed. Off I went doon the brae, struck across the water without seeing or meeting a soul, good or bad, an' up the face o' Mealinrian to get aboove the place—an' I cam' doon by a big grey-stone, no' a full gun-shot from it. I squatted doon in the dry fern and heather just under the stone,—and faith ! if there was na preparations !—aye, and they were at work too.—There was a bit bothy made o' fir branches, an' thacket wi' divots an' heather—ye wud scarce tell it from the hill-side—but I seed the blew reek coming out. In a minat there was a woman and a bit prochach cam' out leuking hard, as if they seed something, or was expeckan' something ; an' sure eneugh, in a wee whilack, up cam' the shelties wi' the corn. Off went the sacks in a jiffey, an' a bonnie sight o' stuff there was o' it, malt or dry, I

* The " thief's step," pass.

'canna' say which—but I seed the place they put it in."

"Well," said Glenvallich, a little impatiently, as Duncan paused for a moment; "it will be the fatter prize when we get it—but what next?"

"Ou, the next job was to get out o' Aultrian as fast as I could, and round the hill face, and doon the glen to Stronegour;—for Malcolm was to take the upper glen, and Rob Macian to go round by Breulach. When I got to the Strone—that's just forenent the Slochd-uaine, I could see that the place was na empty; but I could na cross the glen in broad daylight, for the people in Ballintruim *be to** see me. So I tuke a long round from the Strone, to the fut o' the Garrahvein, and there I lay till dark, resting awhile like. But before the moon was up, I tuke a good leuk from the high lump on the Garrahvein to count the fires, an' syne I cam' here:—it's no long since Malcolm's come, an' Rob Macian's off to tell the gauger and the factor what he seed."

"Well, Duncan, I think you have performed your duty well, and successfully;—and now, how do you think we should proceed?"

"Weel, sir, I do not think we can mak' muckle better o' it than what we thocht at first. I think, if ye'll tak' Malcolm up the glen to the holes and

* Must needs.

burns o' the Garrahvein, and to Aultrian—he kens them as weel as I do—ye cud na miss o' doing weel ; for if the chaps did tak' fright, they could only be off till the passes aboove, where they wud light on Mr. Maclean and the gauger's fouk.—Mr. Tresham an' me'll go round the nose o' Torrebui, an' doon on the Slochd-uaine, and try the Garruglaickan. The factor himsel' is weel acquaint wi' Breulach ; and if Davidson the gauger is smart in the high braes, he'll hae his fill o' work.”

“ Very well, I believe it will do ; but I don't think we've a moment to lose, and it's here we separate. After all, when they are on the ground, each party must be guided by what they may see or hear. But we should all meet somewhere—surely the work will be over by five in the evening.”

“ Ou aye, surely, sir—we canna weel be later.”

“ And where is the best place to meet ?”

“ Just where we spoke o', sir—at the Shealings in Breulach—the factor 'ill be there, and Mr. Davidson.”

“ Well, Tresham—good luck to you ! Mind what we have been saying—resolution and temper are to be the order of the day ; but it well becomes me truly to counsel an old soldier like you—let us be off.”

“ Well, well, I'll do my best—adieu !” And

the party separating in their several divisions, soon lost sight of each other. That of Glenvallich plunged downwards into the dark valley; while Tresham and the forester, with their followers, held a slanting direction upwards, sometimes among rough dwarfish wood, and at others winding among tufts of withered fern and grey heather, interspersed with numerous and shapeless fragments of rocks—the ruins, doubtless, of crags that had crumbled to pieces under the influence of time and weather.

“Leuk, sir,” said Duncan, as they halted for a moment on a height to reconnoitre and to regulate their course. “See thonder!”—and Tresham following the direction of his arm, beheld the glimmering of a fire in a hollow, as it seemed, at no very great distance. He expressed this opinion to the forester, suggesting the propriety of visiting the spot; but that experienced person undeceived him—“Na, na, sir, that’s no in our beat—that’s work for Glenvallich—he most manage yon chield—but there’s a job for us no’ far off.”

By the time they had made some considerable progress further, the darkness, which on the going down of the moon had deepened into a very embarrassing gloom, began to give way a little; and the glimmer of a December morning cast an imperfect light over the higher and more prominent

features of the landscape, while its hollows and remoter parts lay still in shade. The party were at this time upon the slope of a hill, which was intersected by a burn that trickled from the peat bog above. Deep black cracks pervaded the grey mossy soil, giving to it a strange reticulated appearance, as varied only by some tufts of withered heather, it lay crisp under so thick a hoar frost, that one might have supposed it the effect of a smart shower of snow.

“D’ye see yon hole forenent us, sir?” said the forester, pointing across the little burn to a retiring hollow which lay very much in shadow; “yesterday I seed a fire in that very spot. I cud na’ come near it, but I marked the bit, an’ whatever’s come of it, they were at work here no twenty-four hours syne. Lie doon, lads, lie doon in the holes there, till I’ll see what they’re about.” The whole party accordingly concealed themselves in a moss-crack, while the forester, taking out his glass, began coolly but curiously to examine the face of the hill for traces of the work which, according to his account, had been going on there.

“Well, have you got them?” inquired Tresham a little impatiently, after a due time, as he thought, had elapsed. But the forester replied not until he had completed his examination, which continued for some time longer. “No—nothing

can I see, sir, now ; but I'll take my bible oath there was a smoke there yestreen, an' if I dinna find the signs o' it for you, never trust more to Duncan Maccombich.—See, sir, leuk a wee bit wast from the burn, along thon grey patch o' grass—see, there's three white stones, one o' them higher up the bank, in a line wi' the others—and there's a black brunt patch o' heather below it ;—that stone an' the brunt patch is my mark—here, tak' the glass, sir.” Tresham did so, but could make nothing out. “ At all events, we should go there—it's nothing out of our way ?”

“ Not a yard, sir, and I'm certain ye'll find something.”

“ Well, on then.”

The forester told his men to disperse among the peat-cracks, and steal by their aid onwards to the burn, making as little show as possible, and no noise. The ground was very unfavourable for this manœuvre, and the skill of those who had selected a spot for their work which defied all sudden or unobserved approach on any side, called forth no slight commendations from certain old experienced hands among the party. The burn was at length gained, and being under the hill side, it became more practicable to advance towards the spot which was their object, with the hope of being unseen, as the people were screened from view by the deep

rough banks of the stream. When they had attained the nearest practicable point, the whole party, spreading to right and left, made a simultaneous rush forward; but, on reaching the heather patch, not a symptom of brewhouse, brewst, or human being was visible, upon the sharpest inspection.

“Strange enough this, Duncan,” said Tresham, after a few minutes had elapsed in this inquiry; “not only is there no symptom of work going on, but where is there any mark of it’s ever having been here?”

“Bide awee, sir, bide awee, and we’ll see, though this white frost’s sore against us;” and they advanced somewhat further up the hollow. This did indeed betray but little to the curious eyes which searched it. Brown heather, somewhat more abundant than in other parts, grew in patches divided by black hollows; and from a green spot above trickled a clear rill of pure spring water, even now but partially congealed by the frost. “Aye, this is it sure enough—it’s this bit spring that tuke them here—it most be a hard winter’s night that ’ill freeze this well. Here, spread, spread, lads, we most find them out; dinna let them laugh at us after all;” and issuing a few directions in Gaelic, Duncan, with the rest, set

themselves to examine every heather-tuft, and hole in a circle round the place.

It was not long before Duncan himself stopped short. "Aye, aye, see till it, sir," said he to Tresham, who kept close to him, and he pointed to some grains of malted barley, which the displacing of the hoar frost by their feet, brought into view upon the peat earth near the grey stripe of grass which they had observed from the other side. "The malt-house is na' far off, any how."

Tresham himself, stimulated into double alertness by this discovery, soon detected a rough unnatural derangement of the turf and heather, which led to a rigid examination. It soon appeared that in one place a hollow between the brae side and the above-mentioned grey ridge had been increased by digging, and covered with turf and divots so artfully placed, that the slight disorder of the herbage which the quick eye of Tresham had observed could alone have led to its detection; and this had been so far effaced by the effect of the hoar frost which powdered every fibre, that even the more experienced of the party had passed it unnoticed.

The hollow thus formed had been lined with brushwood and fern, and served as a store-house for many bolls of malt. Boughs of trees formed a

terraced roof, on which the turf lay so evenly and with so judicious a slope, that it would doubtless have turned a heavy shower of rain, had the season given cause to apprehend it. At one end of this artificial cellar was a moveable trap-door, formed and covered with the same materials; but all the excisemen in the country, as well as the party who had discovered it, might have passed the place a hundred times without the least suspicion of such a depôt, had it not been for the fire which Duncan had observed, and which led him to mark the spot so accurately.

“ Well, your honour, here’s proof enough I’m thinking—but we most find the still—it’s no’ far off, and it’s a wonder if some o’ the lads themsel’s are na here to watch it, and they’re seeing us this blessed moment.”

“ Faith, Duncan, it’s not unlikely; but what’s to be done?”

“ Ou, just to seek an’ search—if we smoke them out o’ this hole, they’ll fall into the teeth o’ our neighbours.” At that moment a low whistle attracted their attention to another spot, where two or three of their people were standing together groping about upon the ground. The little rill which has already been mentioned, after trickling down some thirty or forty yards, fell into a channel hollowed out by the rains, and which with some

additional excavation, afforded bare room for a large tub, filled at the very time with a decoction of malt, fresh but cold, and partially frozen. From the bank above, a pent or roof of grass and heather covered the vessel; and so perfect was the deception, that it was only the accident of a part having given way under one of the men's feet, that betrayed its existence.

“Five shillings to the man that finds the still and boiler now,” said Duncan in Gaelic. “The Sassenach Duinuassle will pay it, I’m sure.”

“Aye, that I will,” said Tresham, on being made acquainted with this promise in his name; “and five to that—and twenty to him who shall lay hands on one of them who own it.” Away went every man of them, with eyes and wits sharpened by the hope of reward, and encouraged by the belief that they were now on the right scent—nor was it long before the increasing light enabled one of them to discern the prints of many footsteps, as if several persons had been treading together, the frozen dew lying less thickly on the troubled soil. They followed these traces down even to the burn itself, and under an overhanging bank, in a hole blocked up with stones and turf was found the object of their search—a large copper boiler.

“And whare ’ill the *worm* be next?” said one of the men.

“Ou, they’ll be off wi’ her surely,” replied another, “d’ye think they’re such fools as to leave her here? She’s awa’ sure eneugh—but the gentleman wunna grudge us our five shillings any way?”

“No, no, my lads, the money you shall have, depend on it—but what think you, Maccombich, is it worth while looking further?”

“Trowth, sir, I think not,” answered the forester; “we’ve got a good haul here, the still’s no muckle worth, and who can tell but what the news may be spreading? I’m thinking we’ll best be off to the Slochd-uaine, we’ll may be *kep* them there yet.”

“What’s that?” exclaimed Tresham, who had just turned to cast a look around him; “what’s that, just over the rising ground there—there, it’s gone now;—there again—by heaven, it’s a man’s head—just over that brown bush of heather: off boys, off, and catch the fellow.” And he dashed forward himself at full speed up the hill, followed by most of the men. Duncan chose another direction: he started at a pace even swifter than the rest; but slaunting along the brae face, disappeared behind one of its inequalities. A loud roar very soon proclaimed his success and brought the whole party to his side. They found him clutching fast a shaggy-haired, half-clad, miserable-look-

ing object, a little boy of nine or ten years old, who whined and cried, while he strove in vain to extricate himself from the formidable grasp which held him.

“Here’s the watchman—I kent weel enugh what way he wud tak’—they’re a’ off but him, that’s certain, an’ we needna seek for more.”

“And could the wretches leave this miserable little creature, alone by himself in the wide hill—in such a night too—and exposed to the chance of ill-usage from whoever might discover him?” said Tresham, casting a compassionate glance upon the struggling captive.

“Ou de’il a fears but he can tak’ care o’ himsel’, sir : these Glen Shlichard bairns—feggs, they hae more wit afore they cast their teeth, than others have when the beard’s on the chin. This wee prochach noo, I’ll warrant him to watch a still, or boil a pot o’ malt, or tak’ a string o’ shelties up the glen, as weel as any chield o’ twenty.”

“Well, if he is so intelligent, can’t we get something out of him? can’t he tell what’s become of the rest of them?”

“Na faith he—he wud be cut in bits first, or he’s no true blood—an’ may be the puir wee deevil does na ken. They wud na tell him more than they could help—but we’ll see.” With that he

bellowed out some wild Gaelic words into the urchin's ear, but the only effect was to make him roar and scream the louder. "Pesough! pesough! ye deel," roared Duncan in return, shaking him roughly by the arm.

"Don't hurt the creature," said Tresham interposing, and hopeless of any favourable result from such an unpromising commencement on both sides; "bring him along with us, and try to make him go quietly—we can't leave him here. The forester shaking his head, once more addressed the boy, but in a milder key, and at length the violent roaring ceased, and though heavy sobs still betokened the struggle between fear and obstinacy in his heart, he submitted at length to be held peaceably by the arm until the men had staved the wooden vessels and carried the copper boiler to another place, until it should be possible to remove it altogether. The malt was taken out, scattered abroad, trampled into the mud, or thrown into the burn, so as to render it useless, not without some heavy groans from the old hands at the loss of so much good stuff. The place which contained it was destroyed, and the party making fast the urchin by a rope tied round one arm, forced him to accompany them towards the Slochd-uaine.

Their way now lay once more across the hill; as, for obvious reasons, it was held inexpedient

for the party to descend towards the lower and more inhabited parts of the glen. They traversed a great extent of grey moss, chequered as usual with deep black peat-cracks, wet swamps covered with grass, and pools of black water, which were at this time iced over. Bold peaks rose above this vast moss, rearing their heads above the dense morning fog; but they had marched a considerable way ere even the loftiest of them began to be tinged with the cold red light of a December sun. At length their path was crossed by a small stream which drained a large portion of this mossy hill; and Maccombich turning down its course, cautioned the party to silence and circumspection. The bed of the stream descended rapidly. The shoulders of the mountain soon enclosed them; the banks became steep and wild, terminating near the stream in black rock or high gravelly scaurs. The stream itself fell from one pool to another in a rapid succession of cascades over a precipice of rock, and ice; and icicles hung from every ledge and overhanging brow. The stunted wood, now bare and black in its winter garb, served rather to lend a deeper tone of desolation to the scene, than in any degree to embellish it.

The party had proceeded thus, swiftly descending, for a considerable way, when the little urchin,

who had more than once complained of the constraint in which he was held, hurt as it seemed by some jerk of the rope which secured him, gave vent to a loud wild scream. He repeated it but once more, for the forester was at his side in a moment. “*Anuarorst !* ye little deevil,” said he in Gaelic, “if ye set up your pipes once more, de’il be in my fingers if I dinna mak’ ye loup the linn there. Here, Morrison, tak’ a haud o’ this spunkie, an’ if a sound comes out o’ his mouth that would wauken a sleeping deer, pinch his neck to some purpose—haud ye behind us a bit—we’ll push on for the slochd.”

As they now marched on with increasing rapidity, Tresham looking around him, began to experience those dubious perceptions which dawn upon the mind, on visiting unexpectedly some place which we have seen, but imperfectly remember. There were some features of the scenery surely not unknown to him, and he was still tasking his memory to tell him where he had seen them, when the opening rocks disclosed a hollow basin which he yet more distinctly recognized. “What place is this?” said he in a whisper to the forester.

“It’s the slochd, it’s the slochd !” replied he in the same tone,” whisht, for God sake, Sir, we’ll be in it and on them in a moment,” and he led down the very pathway which Tresham remem-

bered to have traversed upon a remarkable occasion. "Do you mind this place, sir," whispered the forester, in his turn, as he saw the young Englishman gazing about him with a perplexed air.

"Mind it?" said he. "Aye well—and this is Slochd-uaine, then."

"Aye, sir, and the very place ye tummul'd into, somehow, no five months syne, just as I suspected—An' noo for them." Loosing the sword which he carried, and grasping his staff, Duncan then rushed forward, followed by some of the party; others had already been sent below the hollow to catch such fugitives as might attempt to escape down the corry. But all their precautions appeared to have been taken in vain, for on gaining the little green basin before the bothy, no sound or sign could be detected of its containing a single living creature.

"Aye, faith, they have got their warning, sure enough, an' they're off!" said Duncan with an air of disappointment; but he cast a keen glance around him before he strode to the entrance of the bothy, which he did with the decided step of one who was familiar with the place. The doorway had been somewhat hastily masked with branches and divots, but it cost not Duncan a moment to tear them away and lay open the entrance. All was dark; but all seemed empty and deserted. The forester went straight to an open-

ing, and removing the grass and heather with which it had been closed, admitted a faint light, which served to show the contents of the place in great confusion.

The large caldron which on Tresham's first visit had reeked with pot-ale, was now cold and heaped around with rubbish ; peats, bits of wood, broken staves, and old ankers, were all piled or stowed in a strange hubbub about it, while the ashes of former fires lay scattered over the floor in most unlovely disorder. A strong heavy smell of liquor tainted the confined atmosphere, and together with the moist condition of the floor, proclaimed that the contents of the caldron had been made use of to extinguish the fire. " Great indeed has been the hurry here," said Duncan with a ludicrously mortified air, " when they wud put the good ale to such a use ; but I'll be cation that it's no' a' gone that gait." Yet it was in vain that the men peered about to discover any thing further. A miserable crib in one corner, which spread with withered heather formed a couch that bore every appearance of having been recently and continually used, was pulled to pieces by them, but no discovery was made ; and the rock itself, bare in some places, and in others hidden only by piles of peats, formed the interior wall, forbidding all hope that any further place of concealment existed.

“ I am certain there was another hole or sleeping-place when I was here,” said Tresham, addressing the forester ; “ and here it undoubtedly must be yet.”

“ Ou, I ken weel about that place, sir,” said Duncan, who had been musing apart for some minutes while the search was going on ; “ but I was thinking—I was minding—trouth, sir, it was just a thocht o’ ould times that cam’ ow’r me. O many’s the blythe nicht I hae seen in this very bit—when I was young an’ wild ; an’ many a bra’ lad and bonnie lass hae I kent here ; and many an honest fellow too, that wud hae stuck by his friend and fought for his king, although he had a hand in the trade. Where are they noo ?—they’re a’ gone, or maist o’ them, and these merry days—they’ll never come again ! An’ as for me, what am I but a dry withered stump, wi’ scarce sap eneugh to keep life in me till my appointed time, an’ neither bud nor blossom to come after me. My curses on them that wrought this ill, and brought bonnie Glen Shlichard to so evil a pass ! Ochone ! never, never will this bonnie bit be a blythe bit more !”

“ Well, well, Duncan,” said Tresham, who though not indisposed to sympathize with the pathos of the forester’s manner, had become somewhat impatient to get on, “ I can understand all

this; but you know we must look to duty now. Come, help me to find the place I speak of."

"It's no' far off, sir," replied the forester; "an' may be, there's more than ye ken o' here." With these words, he began to pull down the pile of peats, when a frame made of wattles interwoven with heather was soon brought to view.

This being removed, gave access to a black-looking hole, the darkness of which the eye sought in vain to penetrate. "We must light a spunk for this," said Duncan; "gather some of the dry wood, lads, and see if ye canna find a piece o' caunle fir." Flint and steel soon produced fire, and the blaze afforded the requisite light. Above one of the *bauks* lay a bundle of the torch fir, and the dark hole was soon illuminated.

"There was your honor's bed, yon nicht, I'll be bound," said the forester, "but little did ye ken what was under you, sir:" and removing some of the dry heather and rubbish near the head of the delectable crib which had afforded so short and troubled a repose to Tresham's weary limbs, he discovered a rude trap-door of wood. "This is the great keep on this side the glen," said he; "there canna miss but to be stuff here; and accordingly, on examining the vault, which was dug, as it seemed, partly in a recess of the rock, and partly cut out of its solid substance, they found many small casks

of whisky, and a considerable store of barley in sacks. Having satisfied themselves in a rough way of the contents of this cellar, they were about to leave the recess, when Tresham, who had been prying curiously into the various holes and corners of this uncomely apartment, lighted upon a bundle of papers, which, with a greasy black pocket-book, were tied together by a bit of rope-yarn. These he thought might throw some light on the transactions and connexions of the gang, and therefore he put the whole into his pocket, intending to examine them at leisure ; and in the meantime turned his attention to a further search of the bothy. Little else of consequence was found, however. Some wretched articles of apparel and coarse provisions, with a few requisites for the business of the place, were all that fell in their way ; and Tresham, seeing that further delay was needless, inquired of the forester how they were to proceed next.

“ It’s no’ that easy to say where the lads ’ill be skulking noo,” replied Duncan, after a minute’s consideration ; “ they’re fairly started an’ on fut it seems, and not one o’ them ’ll be in their ould howfs. But when the gaugers are after them, they’ll often tak’ to the hill, or the burns ; an’ sure eneugh, there’s plenty o’ them, men, and women, and bairns in the wild còrries this blessed minat. I’m thinking the laird ’ill find the nests a’ empty

too, an' he'll hae to seek them like oursel's in the burns an' braes, an' we may drive them into ithers hands."

"And where are the most likely places?" asked Tresham.

"There's two o' them no' far off from this," replied Duncan; "and they lead into other; if your honour thinks proper, I wud try the farthest off mysel', and Finlay here can go wi' you and the lads; he kens the *Garru-glaickan* fine, an' we wud meet on the round lump that comes atween the two. I dinna think they cud get off that way, if they're in it."

"Well then, let us be off; unless we get hold of a prisoner, all this work will go for nothing. But stay, there's too much stuff here to be left to itself; two well-armed men must stay to look after the bothy, and let them keep this little fellow with them. And now let's be off."

Time wore away during these operations, and between marching and delays, the sun had passed its meridian by a full hour's space, ere Tresham and his companions reached the *Garru-glaickan*. It was a chasm of exceeding depth; its sides, as the name imports,* were particularly rugged and precipitous, with black rock and stunted wood. It seemed a fit resort for desperadoes of the worst

* "The rough dell."

description. Not knowing in what part of this retreat the fugitives, if any there were, might be found, it was the opinion of Tresham, confirmed by that of his guide, that they should enter the hollow by a path which struck in near the bottom, and so cut them off from all retreat towards the glen, or from a junction with other parties of their friends. They accordingly commenced their ascent up this ravine by a parcel of scarcely perceptible tracks, formed by the feet of sheep, cattle, and other animals, and speedily were entangled in ground so difficult and steep, that Tresham could not help congratulating himself upon the absence of all more active opposition.

“Aha ! feggs, there’s something no’ far off—see to this,” said one of the men, holding up the cause of his exclamation in his hand.

“Pesough !—whisht, man ! what are ye roaring that way for ; d’ye want to set them a’ off again ?—what is’t, man ?” it was only a horn spoon, evidently just dropt.

“It is well,” said Tresham, who came up at the moment ; “silence, men, and push on.”

Other tokens of a hasty flight were soon perceived. A woman’s mutch or cap, torn off her head by a protruding branch—the fragment of a plaid which had met with some similar accident ; and in one place a meal bag had probably burst,

for the meal was seen in several places scattered among the heather.

“There’s a bit just by,” said Finlay, in a low whisper, “where I’m thinking some o’ them ’ll be;” and scarcely had he said the word, when the distant growl of a dog was heard for a moment, and then sunk suddenly into silence, as if the animal had been reproved, when all was still again.

“Halt!—stay a little, men,” said Tresham in an earnest whisper, which caught the ear of all the party, without carrying the alarm to a distance; “don’t press on foolishly. Finlay, can’t we take the sides of the hill, and come on them from above? That dog barked from behind the height there. Here, three of you pass up to the left, and get over yon shoulder; Finlay and I will go on this side: we can’t miss them.”

A sharp pull brought the party nearly to a level with the height to which Tresham had alluded; and the prudence which had suggested the precaution became very soon apparent; for the water at this point forming a petty cascade, fell by a narrow chasm into a black pool, above which the height in question rose in a precipitous face of rock, stretching across the bottom of the ravine. Had they pursued the track, it would have landed them only at the bottom of this precipice, from whence they must have won their way by a zigzag

ascent to the top. That this too would have had to be done in the face of an enemy, became also clear, for as they attempted to close on either hand, a man armed with a long gun in his hand made his appearance on the height, and summoned the party to halt.

“Hurrah, boys!” cried Tresham, “on with you, and seize the fellow. Five guineas to him who lays the first hand on him.”

“He had better chop it off,” replied the man in a steady and sarcastic tone of defiance; “be wise, boys, and stay where ye are; dinna trouble us, an’ we’ll no’ trouble you. If ye are fools enough to attempt it, there’s a dozen weel armed chields at my back will gi’ ye as good as ye’ll bring; so choose for yoursel’s.” He added a few sentences in Gaelic, which Tresham of course did not understand; but he had heard enough. The tall and striking figure of the man, relieved as it was against the sky, had powerfully arrested the young Englishman’s attention. The voice increased his suspicion, or rather confirmed his belief—it was his surly host of the Slochd-uaine, and the man who had attempted his life at the tenkill in the Roichills wood.

Stung with indignation at his insolent presumption, as well as with these recollections, he exclaimed again, “Hah, villain! is it you then?”

At him, boys!—don't let him escape!" and he made several rapid steps towards the place where he stood.

"By the soul o' my father, young spark! ye'd better loup into that linn, than come one step farther. Back wi' ye, and thank me for your life!"

"Aye! think ye to frighten me, ye impudent scoundrel?" thundered the indignant Englishman. "Surrender!—throw down that tool this instant, or you're a dead man:" and he raised his loaded fowling-piece to the recover, and cocked it.

"My curse upon you, take it then!" retorted the ruffian from between his set teeth, as he quickly brought his own gun to the level; and the sequel to his reply might have been as fatal as his threat implied, had not a female figure made her appearance at the moment, and darting forward with a loud shriek, clasped the man round the neck with one hand, striking up the muzzle of his piece, while she uttered in Gaelic, and in piercing accents, "No murder!—O no murder!" The hills around echoed to the discharge of the piece, but its contents passed harmlessly over the head of him it was aimed at.

A volley of fearful curses flew from the smuggler's mouth. He grappled fiercely with the girl, who still clung around him, as if he had determined to make her his victim in place of him she had saved.

Horror struck at the sight, Tresham darted forward, and caught her just as the ruffian had shaken her from his hold with so fierce a jerk, as to send her staggering and reeling almost to the verge of the precipice. Even in that moment of agitation, his heart leapt within him at recognizing in the female who now clung to him instinctively, the same gentle girl who had so hospitably entertained him on his first memorable visit to the Slochd-uaine.

“To the devil wi’ you all, fools an’ traitors!” exclaimed Kenneth-Dhoruv, for it was no other than himself, “tak’ what ye hae worked for,” and dropping his discharged gun, he drew from his belt a large pistol, which he cocked, and stepping one pace forward, levelled it at the objects of his vengeance, as they still stood near the brow of the height. But his murderous intent was again frustrated: a young and active Highlander, clad in handsome tartans, started up from the brushwood behind the bank on hearing the screams of the girl, and when he saw the action of Kenneth, he sprung forward with a shout, and seized his extended arm. A fierce and rapid altercation in Gaelic ensued between them, during which time Tresham’s men, recovering from their momentary confusion, ran in and closed around them both.

“*Thannumumdiaoul!*—but ye may find your-

selves wrong yet," exclaimed Kenneth Dhoruv, gnashing his teeth. With one powerful effort he shook himself free from their hold, fired his pistol at random among them, drew a claymore which hung at his side, made one or two rapid cuts, whirled the blade around him with a fearful sweep, and springing down the other side of the height, disappeared among the brushwood.

"Fire!—fire at the fellow!" shouted Tresham, as he witnessed this unexpected and energetic manœuvre.

"O mercy, mercy!" exclaimed the girl, "don't shoot—spare my father!" Her appeal was too late to stop one or two pistol shots which were aimed at his figure as it glided among the leafless bushes; but a turn of the rock shut him out from view, and in truth, the men were for the moment too much discomposed by the effects of his vigorous assault, to think of pursuit. One of them lay prostrate and bleeding on the heather, while another held his hand to his bonnet as if he had received his death's wound. All passed with the rapidity of lightning, and before Tresham, encumbered as he was with the girl, who till then had clung about him, could make a step in advance, she uttered another cry,—“My father!—my father!” exclaimed she in Gaelic, and darted after

the smuggler, followed by the young Highlander, who probably had saved the lives of both.

“Hollah, men! what are you about?—what are you good for?” shouted Tresham, impatiently. “Why don’t you follow?”

“There’s some o’ us ’ill no’ be good for muckle again, I’m doubting,” growled one of them, as he tried to raise the fallen man; “an’ as for following, we might as weel follow the deevil as yon ane.”

It was not without a very painful feeling, that Tresham approached the wounded man, whom he believed, from the stillness of his attitude, to be in the very arms of death; but his anxiety on the subject was speedily allayed, for it appeared that a sharp cut on the arm was the sum total of the injury sustained; while the thick felt bonnet of the other man had preserved him from any thing more than a smart blow on the head: alarm and surprise had done all the rest.

“Pretty fellows ye are, indeed, lads, to let the prisoners escape so; but after him, men!—after him! and let us see if our companions have been more fortunate. He may fall into their hands yet, and I hope they’ll give a better account of him. Here, man—here’s a handkerchief to tie up that scratch. Don’t for shame make a work about it. And now for it!”

Stung by the young soldier's reproof, the men resumed their march, and the wounded lad, half ashamed of his faint-heartedness, yet smarting with pain, like a child coming out of the sulks, tried to smooth his brow, secured the cut in his arm, and followed his comrades.

The cause of the resistance they had met with soon appeared; for, on proceeding a few paces further, they found that a number of horses had been collected on a little flat, just beyond the scene of the skirmish we have described; and the stand made by Kenneth Dhoruv had unquestionably been for the purpose of favouring their retreat. That he had followed this cavalcade was most probable; and that loaded horses of whatsoever character could make sufficient progress in such ground to outstrip pursuit, seemed on the other hand next to impossible. "On, men, on!" shouted Tresham, once more excited by renewed hope of success; "push on, and we must catch them before they fall in with the rest." The men seemed to think so too, for some of them, probably not relishing a second personal encounter with the "father of evil," in the person of the smuggler chief, rather slackened than increased their speed, leaving Tresham, followed by Finlay, to press forward in the track of the horses.

The pursuit was not a long one. The tracks

were traced up the left hand bank of the ravine ; and scarce had they reached the brow, when their ears were greeted by a sudden uproar, and the shouts of many voices. “ They’re at it, by heaven !” exclaimed Tresham, and one or two dropping shots in quick succession confirmed his words, giving pregnant proof that his friends were engaged with the smugglers. In another instant the fact was confirmed by the testimony of their eyes ; for, on reaching the height in front, they looked down on a little green plain, where at least twenty Highland shelties were to be seen, loaded with casks and sacks and other articles ; some huddled together in a knot, others being led hastily away by women or boys, and some taking advantage of their momentary freedom to crop a quiet mouthful of grass. Of the men who had been leading them, some were still closely engaged with a strong party which had overtaken them ; others, disarmed or disabled, stood still struggling, or sullenly quiet in the clutch of their captors ; and a few, probably seeing that the fortune of the day was against them, were scouring off, or helping the women to drive away the horses.

To dash down the steep brae face, and to join the skirmishers was the work of a moment, and the shouts of this small reinforcement completed the panic and consternation of the Glen Shlichard men.

Such as could took to flight with those who had preceded them; but several remained prisoners in the hands of the party. All who could be spared of the assailants were then set to work to collect the spoil, and set off after the horses, which still wandered at large in the boggy ground.

It was not till all resistance was at an end, that Tresham had time to cast his eyes over the ground. Of the various groupings which occupied it, one instantly fixed his attention: his friend Glenvallich, together with Kenny, the under-keeper, were busily employed about the forester, Duncan Maccombich, who ghastly pale, bleeding profusely, and as it seemed severely hurt, leaned on his gun, gazing on vacancy, and heedless of every thing around him.

“ Good heaven, Glenvallich!—met already!” exclaimed Tresham coming up, “ and what’s the matter here, for God’s sake?”

“ Tresham!—thank heaven! I am glad you’re come—I was afraid—this is worse work than I looked for.”

“ O we’re all right!—but what ails Duncan—badly hurt?”

“ Yes, I fear so; he won’t speak. Here, Duncan, man—how is it?—what ails you, man?”

“ It *was* her—it was *hersel*’ sure enough!” uttered the forester in Gaelic, slowly and empha-

tically, and staring around him with a fearful shudder; "once she cam'—twice she has come!—an' the third time!—weel, weel!" and slowly and solemnly shaking his head, he bent his eyes upon the ground.

"Come, that's right, speak, man—speak out—what's the matter? where are you hurt?"

"The hurt's may be no muckle, sir," replied the forester, now coming more to himself; "but that mak's little odds—I'm no' long for this world."

"Why, what stuff is this, man?—let us see your hurt, it can't surely be so much, after all."

"Thanks to your honour, I'll sort it mysel'—better that ye see after the beasts an' the lads there—Kenny 'ill stay wi' me."

"Come, that's right—have a good heart, we'll be with you again in a minute,"—and Glenvallich and his friend turned their attention to the more important consequences of the fray. They were far from trifling. Of more than twenty loaded beasts, only three or four escaped, and these without their loads. The rest were collected together and placed in charge of a certain number of the party. Of the Glen Shlichard men, seven remained prisoners, two of them severely and two slightly wounded. The women and children, who were less the objects of attention, and whose retreat

had been favoured by the men's resistance, all escaped; in fact, no attempt was made to detain them. Of the assailants several had received contusions from the heavy sticks of their opponents; one was shot through the arm, and another had got a light cut of a broadsword in the head. On examining the state of the forester, it appeared that a sword stroke, aimed probably at his head, had fallen short, and catching the shoulder, had slaunted down to his breast, inflicting a long and ghastly, though neither a deep nor dangerous wound.

“ God bless me, Maccombich, I'm very sorry for this,” said Glenvallich with great earnestness, when he saw the gashed and bloody bosom of his faithful servant, which certainly looked in a very alarming condition; I thought you was a better swordsman than to get slashed in this fashion—how did this happen?”

“ It was my own fault, your honour—it was my own fault—it's no' the like o' him that could catch me thon way,” replied Duncan, with a slight flush of pride arising on his pale cheek; “ it was a' the sight o' her! I just cud na bide the look she gied me! but it 'ill a' be ow'r soon—it 'ill a' be ow'r soon!”

“ Why what *can* be the meaning of this, Mac-

combich? Who are ye talking of?—it is not like you to let yourself be disturbed by fancies and shadows.”

“It was no shadow, your honour—it was no shadow,” said Duncan shaking his head with a sad smile; “but it’s no matter; there’s other things to think o’ e’en noo. I’ll just tie up this scart—I might be ashamed o’ showing it—and we’ll best be off to meet the factor while it’s day light, for we’ll see no more o’ the chaps that’s off, an’ ’haith we’ll hae enough to do to keep what we have.”

“But are you able to go so far, Maccombich?”

“What wud ail me, sir? you dinna think it’s this bit scratch that has made such a fool o’ me? Ochone, muckle worse wud na’ stop me after a deer—no fear for me.”

The horses and their loads were now collected and arranged; the prisoners, secured in the best manner that circumstances would permit, were placed under a guard of the trustiest men, and nothing further remaining to be done, nor any further cause existing for concealment, the whole party filed down the intricate pathway to the body of the glen, through which the road led to its upper and less frequented quarters.

“But how did you happen to get to this side of the glen?” inquired Tresham of his friend, when

they had reached more even ground, "I understood your share of the duty lay entirely on the opposite side."

"It is true, such was the arrangement," replied Glenvallich, "but after scouring the face of the Garrahvein, without further success than destroying some bolls of malt and staving a few casks and tubs, we fortunately fell in with Rob Macian one of our scouts, who came to tell us that the Aultrian howff had been alarmed and deserted and that the people had taken to the other side; and from a height a little further on, we were lucky enough to espy a string of men and horses, making straight for the Garruglaikan—the same we have this moment left. You may believe we lost no time in following them, sending Rob to look for your party; and a sharp pull we had after them. But they were too much encumbered to proceed very fast; and no doubt they had to wait for their chief, your friend Kenneth Dhoruv, with his convoy from below. We tracked them up that pretty sort of a path we have just descended; we heard their voices shouting to each other; and I rather suppose they were joined by their friends not many minutes before we made our appearance. I must do my friend Malcolm, and indeed all of my party, the justice to say, that they behaved with

perfect coolness and resolution. But not a little astonished were we, when at a turn in the course of the stream, we saw coming hastily through the dwarf birch, a number of men whom we speedily recognized for Maccombich and his party. Surprised and even alarmed as we were at his first appearance, I assure you, that when we came to know why he was there, the reinforcement was by no means unacceptable. The voices of the fugitives were now heard at a short distance, and so dividing our people so as to bear from two sides against the place where we supposed them to be, we pushed on in perfect silence, but with all the speed we could exert. I flatter myself, Tresham, you would have been delighted with the gallant way in which the whole party moved on to the attack, and the military genius displayed by their leader in his dispositions. You may imagine our satisfaction when we reached the top of the ascent, and saw more than a score of horses, with a crowd of men, women, and children, busily engaged in making arrangements for quitting the ground to continue their flight. You may fancy too, their consternation, when they heard our shouts as we poured upon them from both sides. Poor creatures! my heart almost relented at the cry which the women set up when we ran forward, some to

seize the animals, and others to secure such of the men as could be got hold of. The men themselves stared stupidly at us, and I do believe would have submitted quietly to the seizure both of property and person, but for the interference of one stout squat fellow in a sailor's jacket, who called upon them to defend their goods. The women too, who were not molested, recovering a little from their panic, began to abuse their husbands, and brothers, and sons, for pitiful cowards, and challenged them, if they had the hearts of a "muirfoul powt," to keep us off while they carried off the beasts. The sailor flourished his cutlass, and drawing forth a pistol, swore to shoot the first man that advanced; but our blood was too much up to mind his threats; cutlasses and swords were drawn, and guns were clubbed or levelled. A shot or two, probably more from accident than design, betokened more of serious earnest than I could have wished for, and in another moment there was a general skirmish, one party pressing on, and the others endeavouring to resist, but still slowly giving way.

"I heard at this time a voice call out in Gaelic, "Mark Macgillieculloch! mark the free-trader's enemy!" and in another second, a shot whistled by me. Duncan, who heard the cry and saw the shot, gave a loud shout, and calling on Malcolm and a few

others near him, made a rush towards the point from whence it came. His charge had a strong effect, and sent several of our opponents to the right about; and I believe the thing would have been soon over, when a loud halloo was heard from above our heads, and a man whirling about a drawn sword in his hand, appeared springing down like a deer from a height close by, towards the place of conflict. The shout seemed to operate like a charm on our opponents, who returned it with loud acclamations and cries of ‘Kenneth! Kenneth Dhoruv!’ and the fray which had flagged, recommenced.

“ But it appeared that Kenneth’s shout had animated more than his own friends, for no sooner had Duncan Maccombich caught the sound and got sight of the man, then uttering a terrible oath in Gaelic, and clubbing his gun, he burst through the throng to meet him, clearing his way to right and left with an energy worthy of a champion of old times. At this moment the crowd of moving figures shut him out from my view; but I knew that he and Kenneth met, for I heard his voice addressing him in tones of high indignation. But just then the greater part of our antagonists appeared to lose heart, for they broke and ran, and men and women were scattered over the little plain. What it was that caused this sudden panic, I do

not know ; doubtless your own opportune appearance had its effect ; but when the crowd cleared, there saw I Duncan Maccombich, standing much as you found him, pale, bleeding, and motionless as a statue, as if he had been blasted and petrified by some terrible spell. I cannot account for it any more than for his strange disjointed exclamations and singular conduct afterwards. That he got his wound from Kenneth's sword, I think is clear ; and that Kenneth has got off without mortal injury seems certain enough also ; perhaps Maccombich, when his mind returns to its tone or gets rid of the strange visionary fancy which seems to have taken hold of it, will be able to explain and tell us what did really happen. So there you have a full true and particular account of our operations since we parted—and I am glad that so much has been achieved with so little bloodshed, comparatively speaking, for I promise you the lads were in good earnest, and I heard many hearty blows given and received. Tell me now what you have done, and how we came to meet all so opportunely at this critical point ; for you know I have not had time to hear a word from Maccombich."

" Why truly," replied Tresham, " the first part of our day's work differs but little, I think, from your own. But I have found out, at all events,

the scene of my adventure in the bothy, which you remember gave us something to talk of in July last; and I fell in with an old acquaintance or two in my way hither. Your friend Kenneth Dhoruv is undoubtedly the very man who shot at me two days ago in Roichills wood, and also my friend of the bothy, and had it not been for another old acquaintance, I think the fellow might have made good his worst threats." Tresham then related succinctly all that had occurred to himself and party both at Slochd-uaine and in Garruglaikan, and concluding with an expression of his own astonishment and gratification at the various and unexpected rencounters which had occurred, both with friends and foes. "But," added he, "I am as much surprised as you can be at the condition of our friend Duncan; I see little to be apprehended on the score of his wound, but the shock which could unsettle so strong a mind, and so powerful a frame as his, must have been singularly severe."

"Why, as to that," replied Glenvallich, "I am not exactly so sure that you are right in supposing Maccombich's mind to be possessed of much moral strength; courage and fortitude he has indeed, sufficient to render him proof against most ordinary trials, however severe; but like the greater

number of his countrymen, he has a strong dose of superstition, and if that key has been struck, there's no saying how far the whole machine might be jarred. I am much inclined to think that something of this sort has occurred, although it is not easy to imagine how. He certainly did recognize the redoubted smuggler chief—perhaps he was one of his early associates, and may have led the poor fellow into some bad scrape, the remembrance of which has shocked him. I remember now, he spoke of a *she*—and if a woman were concerned, there's no saying how deep the wound may have pierced—for Duncan, they say, was once a most sensitive person. However, it is useless speculating; Duncan himself must clear up the mystery, and till he can do so, we must have patience.—But come, we must step out—the day is short now; I wish we may get to Breulach before night closes in.

We shall not occupy much more of our reader's time or patience, in accompanying the party of the laird and his friend up the glen, nor in detailing the proceedings of the others, whose duty lay towards its upper extremity. They were not altogether unsuccessful, for they destroyed some brewing stations, scattered some malt and pot-ale, and seized a good many casks of whisky, some corn, and sun-

dry brewing utensils. But the Glen Shlichard folks were obviously in possession of pretty correct information of what was projecting against them ; though it appears to have reached them somewhat late ; and they sought obviously to frustrate the plans of their assailants, by breaking cover, as it were, by an unusual, difficult, and almost unknown route, rather than by attempting any of the more practicable but guarded passes ; and had it not been for the sagacity and experience of the forester, and the lucky information which reached Glenvallich's party, there is little doubt they would have succeeded in throwing their pursuers off the scent, and evading the severe loss as well as punishment which had now fallen upon them.

During the march of the party up the glen, although they passed many huts, both single and in clusters, all were silent, and, as it seemed, deserted. One or two little urchins were observed peeping from a hole which did duty for a window in the side of a turf tenement ; but no molestation was offered, nor did a word pass on either side. In melancholy silence they marched along, until, with barely light enough to see their way, they reached the appointed rendezvous, an old sheep fuk and some shealings in Breulach, and found the rest of

their friends already there, and prepared to receive them, with fires kindled and provisions in a fair way of being made ready for the general good.

As soon as the requisite arrangements had been made for securing the seizures and the prisoners in the hands of the proper officers, Glenvallich and his friend sent for the forester, and questioned him. Their first inquiry was directed to the state of his hurts, which they were pleased to find he still treated as a trifle. He assured them that he scarcely felt the wound, and that it would speedily be well. But when his master pursued the subject, by inquiring into the circumstances under which he received this wound, and which had agitated him so powerfully, the forester became more reserved; his unwillingness to reply was obvious, and when he did, it was with a clumsy attempt to explain away his former expressions; he even attempted to smile at the agitation which they had remarked, and which he admitted to have existed, though to a less degree than they supposed. But these shallow expedients would not succeed with Glenvallich.

“It is plain, Maccombich,” said he, “that some extraordinary occurrence has befallen you; for a man of your nerve does not easily suffer himself to be overcome in the way you were to-day. I

am anxious for the health of your mind as well as of your body, and as I have been the cause of your coming here, I conceive myself bound to repair, so far as I am able, whatever injury either may have sustained in this day's service. If, therefore, you regard your own reputation or my feelings, not to speak of my commands, you will explain to me what it is that has so much discomposed you. Your friend Mr. Tresham is not less interested in the business, and with him and me the communication shall rest, if you desire it."

The forester cast upon his master an uneasy, anxious look; he writhed, as it seemed, under the painfulness of his feelings, and continued silent and absorbed in his own reflections, for a considerable time.

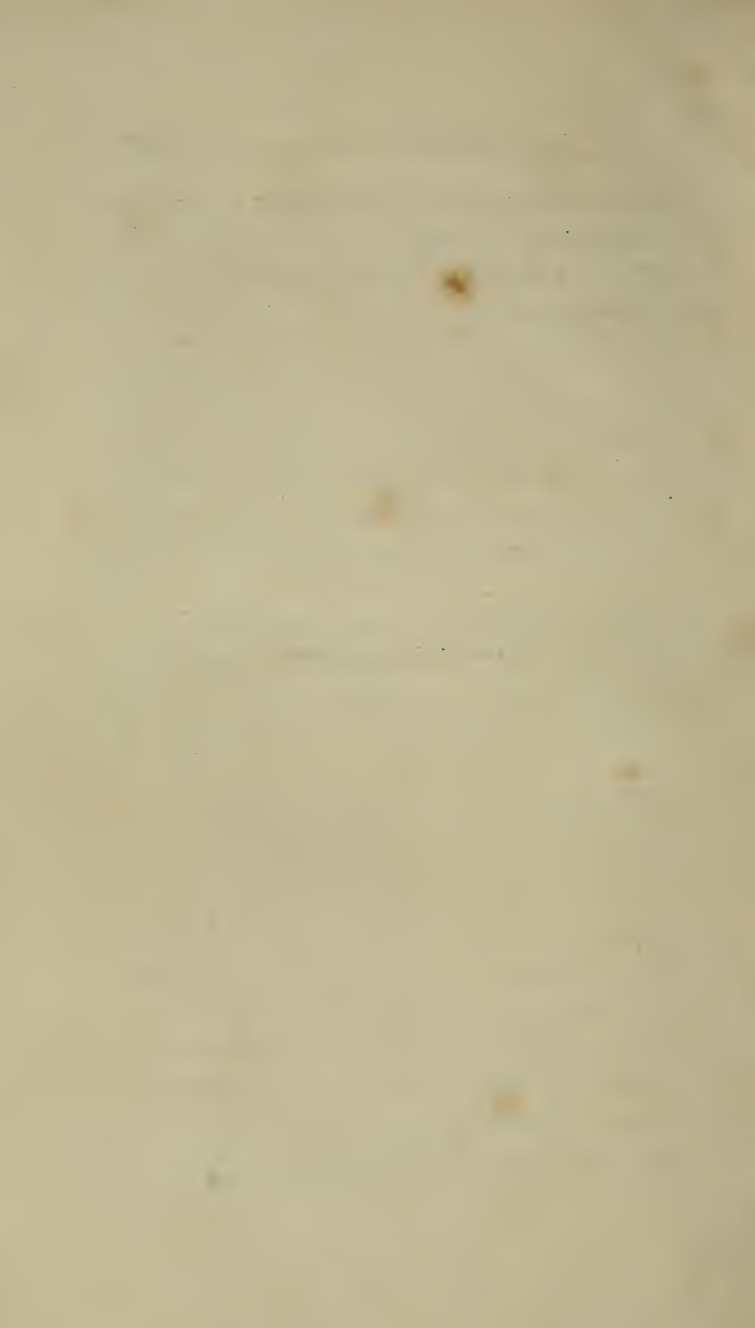
"Weel, sir," said he at last, "no doubt ye have a right to ken all that I ken about the matter, and it's no for me to conceal it from your honour, although I wud rather put my hand in the fire thonder, than talk o' what I seed this blessed day, or tell what most be tell't, to do your bidding. Your honour never sought to hear muckle o' my story, an' God knows I had little heart to tell it, for little is there in it that wud please you or do credit to mysel'; but it's no use concealing matters that will be kent some time or other, an' if ye wud

understand what happened the day, I most begin wi' what passed long ago—so, wi' both your leaves, gentlemen, I'll just tell the whole tale from first to last as it happened.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON

EBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.













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